

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

FEB. 1924

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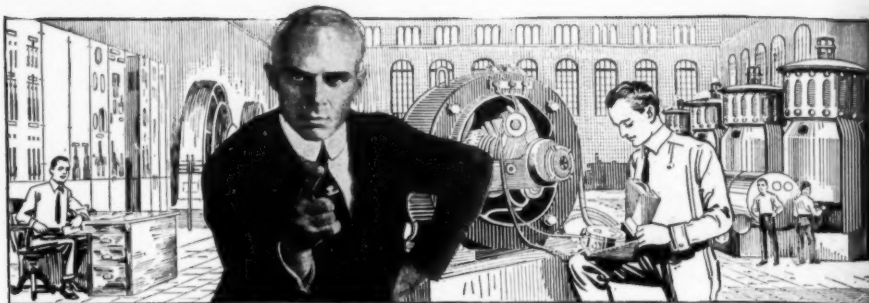


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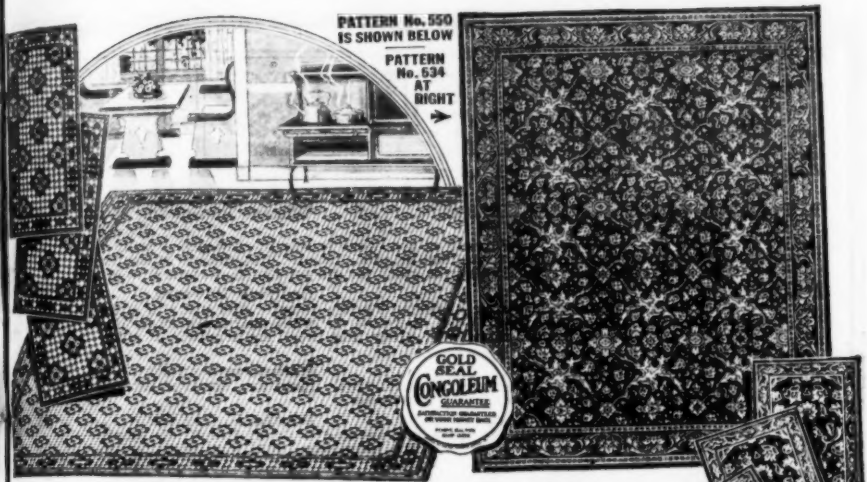
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PATTERN No. 550
IS SHOWN BELOW

PATTERN
No. 534
AT
RIGHT



\$100 Brings 4 Congoleum Rugs For LESS Than Price of One

One room-size 9x12 ft. Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rug and a Gift of three extra small rugs to match. Your choice of two of the loveliest Congoleum patterns ever produced!

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The Universal Rug—for Every Room in the Home Sent on Approval—Credit Without Asking—Year to Pay

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February
1924

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. LII
No. 6

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Single Copies, Twenty Cents

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Dreamy Melody

VOCAL

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Porch
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City.....State.....
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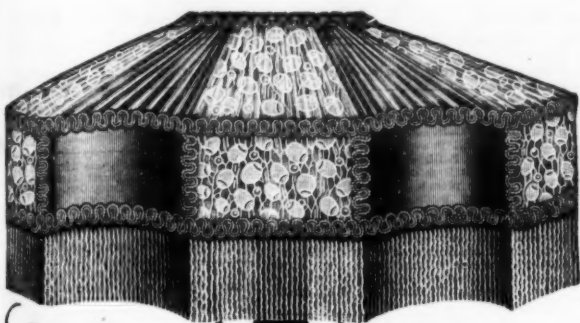
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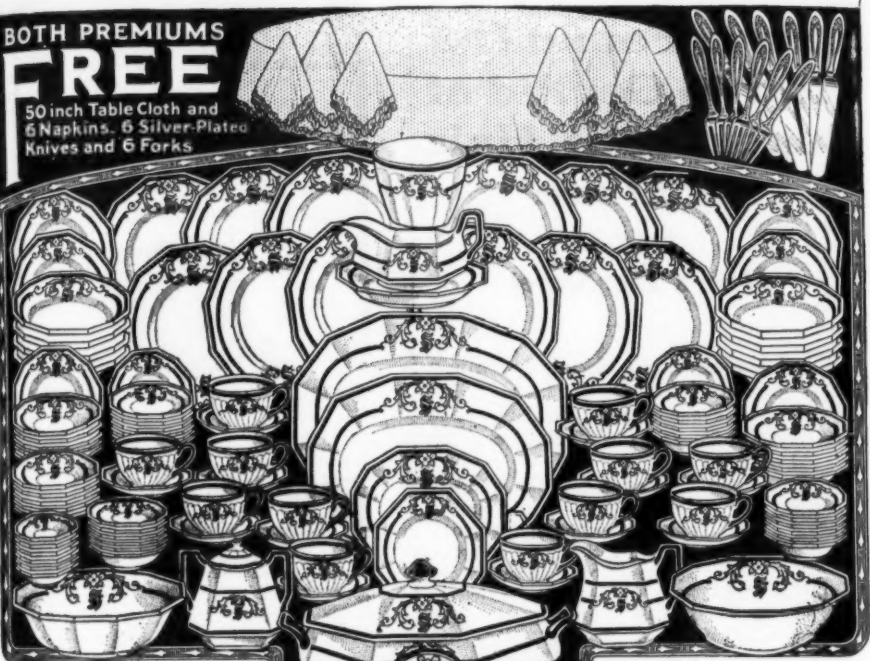
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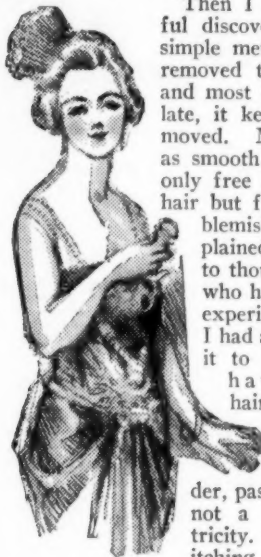
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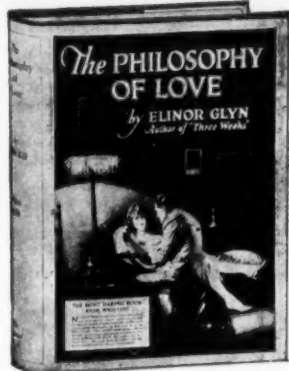
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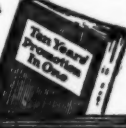
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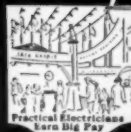
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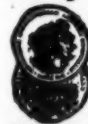
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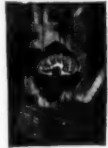
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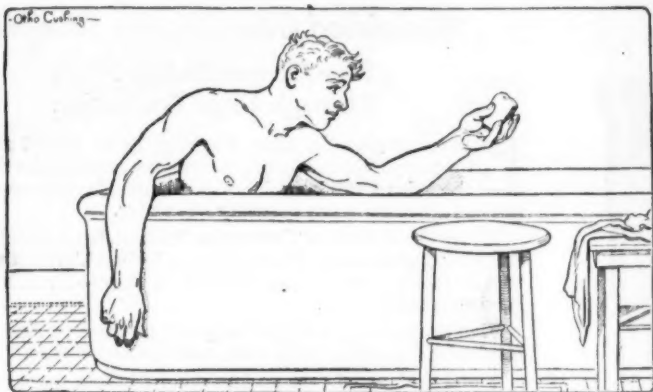
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. LII.

FEBRUARY, 1924.

No. 6

The Measure of Magnificence

By Warren E. Schutt

Author of

"Julietta, Traitress," "Leveled Purposes," etc.



CHAPTER I.

GRIDLEY saw but little of the opera. "Manon," always slight of meaning for him, interested him not at all this evening. Eyes and mind were inexorably attracted to the center box of the parterre where Constance Farrand sat with a man he did not know—in solitary splendor, Gridley couldn't help thinking, because it did seem as if her magnificence elevated her above all the rest. It was the first time Gridley had seen her since she became the most *recherché* prima donna of the Continent. She intrigued him; not the woman in her, as always heretofore, but the change in her, a subtle and indescribable change which could have been noticed only by a man who had known her over a space of years. Gridley did not like that change.

Monsieur Ribasse, Gridley's host of the evening, head of that private banking institution that had borne his name since the days of Napoleon, rival to the Rothschilds in everything but tradition, and surpassing them in this—Monsieur Ribasse, as became the perfect host he was, saw Gridley's preoccupation and entered into it:

"*Femme à merveille*, your divine American," he said almost devoutly.

"Do you call her that in Paris: *la divine Américaine*?" Gridley asked, tight lipped, a little incredulous.

"And why not? What other woman on earth would dare defy the directors of the Opéra as she has done to-night?"

"Yes?" Gridley prompted him, still casually.

"Imagine this, mon ami. She was billed to sing *Thais* here to-night. The Englishman comes over for the week-end. She utterly refuses to sing *Thais*. Why? Who knows? Who else can sing *Thais*. No one, of course. Hence they must bring 'Manon' forward from next Tuesday to present to-night, and the divine Constance has the unexampled effrontery nevertheless to appear publicly in her box, as you see. Could anything be more delightful? More perplexing to *messieurs les directeurs*? Or, for the matter of that, more pleasing to the Parisian public than this sign of her—what may we say—her artistic temperament? *Parole d'honneur*, mon ami, but the journals will have their gossip about it to-morrow."

Gridley could not well make comment

of import. It was the sort of thing one could expect from Constance Farrand. Temperament, this time, he judged, and not a gallery play. His only reply was a question:

"Who is the Englishman?"

"The Englishman? Do you not know him? Ah, yes, I forget; you have not before been in Europe since the war. He is Grendon Paul."

Gridley looked now with more keenness.

"So that," said he, "is Grendon Paul." No one in the upper strata of international finance need ask twice who Grendon Paul was, even though the name had not been heard before the war.

"Yes, that is Grendon Paul." Monsieur Ribasse didn't like him, Gridley gathered from a subtlety of tone.

And in that respect Gridley aligned himself with his host. Nevertheless he said:

"Handsome chap. Striking. You'd know he was somebody. And not over forty, either. Amazing success."

Monsieur Ribasse sighed.

"Yet one regrets to see their intimacy. He is not of her kind. She is degrees above him in any respect."

"I wonder." Gridley was half musing when he said that.

Monsieur Ribasse looked at him in mild wonder.

"You are thinking, perhaps, only of outward appearances."

Gridley was studying them.

"That may be," he admitted, and with much truth, for they were a striking pair. Superb woman that she was, vivid in her magnificence yet alluring in spite of it, with black velvet for her proud blondness, and diamonds: the woman whom any one must instinctively have chosen as being the most splendid creature of her kind in all that assemblage. And Grendon Paul, imposing of physique, dark, immobile face clean-cut on heroic lines. "Yes," Gridley continued,

"I may have been thinking of externals only."

Monsieur Ribasse was still mildly outraged about it. "But—but Grendon Paul, mon ami, an intimate of hers. Who is he, and whence? And what, for the matter of that, but a mushroom money bag, even though he be for the moment, or for the generation, of heroic caliber? Most regrettable."

"Do you know her, Monsieur Ribasse?" Gridley asked.

Monsieur Ribasse shook his head regretfully.

"But no, mon ami. It is one of the pleasures that not fortune nor favor can buy unless she wills."

"Ah," was Gridley's sphinxlike comment.

And as an echo to it there came a rap at the loge door. Monsieur Ribasse received a note from a page, scanned it; then, dumfounded, handed it to Gridley. Gridley read:

DEAR MONSIEUR RIBASSE: We are having a little supper in my apartment after the opera. Will you come and bring Mr. Gridley?
CONSTANCE FARRAND.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Ribasse, catching nervously at his small gray pointed tuft of beard. "But how has this arrived? This invitation? She knows you, mon ami?"

Gridley smiled a tight-lipped smile.

"All my life. We grew up together—adjoining houses, perambulators wheel to wheel, boy and girl together in school—all that sort of thing."

"Astonishing! And here am I telling you all these things about her which undoubtedly you know better than I."

"Such fortuities of life, monsieur, mean nothing. I haven't known her in some years."

Gridley managed to make his speech ring true without revealing the whole truth. He put aside thus casually his acquaintance with her because he had, he hoped, succeeded in planning his life without her, partly because her superb

magnificence seemed to make her unattainable for himself, partly because—as a corollary to the preceding—his sound reason had little by little excluded her as she went beyond him in the world's esteem. She might have been so vastly much that he wanted her to be, and she was—how to put it?—so vastly much more than that. All well enough to flatter himself that since his engagement to Jean Ballinger he had put Constance Farrand out of his mind; but even now the sight of her, this direct communication with her, set up within him a sharp fever of discontent with himself for being so little; of discontent with her for being so much that he would not have her be.

Monsieur Ribasse was still dumfounded.

"But imagine! All this time you have known her. I wish I might have been permitted to think that this invitation was primarily for me."

"Without doubt the invitation is primarily for you, monsieur," Gridley said gallantly, though without meaning it. For in it, in the peculiar manner of its issuance, he saw one of Constance's clever moves. She undoubtedly knew that, if she addressed the invitation to him directly, he would have refused. Whereas, by addressing it to Monsieur Ribasse, she practically assured Gridley's coming to her. Queer how, on occasion, Constance came back to him, openly sought him. Less than a year ago she had cabled him from Milan after a year's silence, begging him to come to her, and he had refused, though Heaven knew how much it had cost him to refuse. Oh, very rare were those occasions, to be sure: probably when she was tired of the adulation of the mighty of earth, for which she lusted insatiably.

"You will come with me to her apartment?" Monsieur Ribasse asked rather eagerly.

Again Gridley thought before he

gave his answer. He preferred, if it had been decorously possible or expedient, not to meet Constance again. That quickening which always she aroused in him was now in his veins even as the contemplated supper with her. It was not good for his peace of mind.

On the other hand, Ribasse was eager to go to her. He could not well go alone in view of the expression of the invitation. Gridley, moreover, had no sound reason for not going—not any reason at all that he could give to his host. And most important of all, the French banker was of inestimable value to him in that business that had brought him to Europe.

Thus Gridley weighed expediency and decorum against his prudence, and prudence was found wanting. In any case, on the following day he would be driving down along the Loire for a week of rest with Jean Ballinger, whose calm strength would allay for him that vivid sense of discontent, of unrest, which Constance Farrand gave him. And so, wondering much what it would be like—this first time of meeting her face to face after two years—Gridley told Ribasse that he would go, of course.

On the way thither, Monsieur Ribasse, secure of confidence in his limousine, spoke nevertheless in an undertone to Gridley:

"I am wondering if it is not prudent, even if perhaps unnecessary, to warn you that, with an affair such as yours on the march, amounting in reality to the buying and selling of a nation in which Grendon Paul is most vitally interested——"

"Is he really, then, as rumor has it," Gridley asked, "the man behind the throne?"

"Yes. And he is a man, of course, who will stop at nothing to protect his interests."

"Thanks for the warning. I shall be most discreet," Gridley promised without hesitation.

CHAPTER II.

In Constance's apartment, Gridley found evidences of that development of her character that he had seen registered upon her face and bearing as he studied her across the stalls at the opera. Here he found a sumptuousness that foisted its regality upon one. In the old days when he haunted her apartments in New York or Chicago or Philadelphia, wherever within easy reach of him she chanced to be singing, there had been nothing of gold plate and satin liveries. In the old days, too, she had had women of her own kind about her, and men of whom, perchance, one had not heard, and was therefore the more delighted to meet.

Whereas this evening Constance had but few women, and those either cheap or dowdy; and men of recognized power only, consumed by their own conceit or compelled by their fame to maintain poses: such men as Henri Bertin, the playwright, Sénateur Morigny, the Duc de Montojo from the other side of the Pyrenees, Sassonoff, others of equal—that is the word—notoriety: a formidable roster of which Grendon Paul took the lead as being, for the moment, the elect of their hostess. Amongst them all Gridley, spare, grave faced, unassertive, and unknown, was indeed of small commotion.

For at first Constance did nothing to recognize him as an old acquaintance. Ribasse, better known than he, was rather hesitatingly taken up by the rest. Gridley, however, was left to wander about the great drawing-room undisturbed, and cooled his heels more comfortably before Constance's Fragonards and Dürers than he could have done by listening to Montojo's polo talk or Bertin's self-conceit. And presently Constance came to him.

"I don't like you, Ken," was her astonishing introduction. "You make me hate all this."

"How can you hate it, Connie, when

it smacks so agreeably and so completely of the purple?" Gridley's irony was playful.

"Please don't be nasty. I needed you to-night. Come with me."

"Your guests?"

"It is this"—she included her apartment in her gesture—"that they want, and not me."

"Frankly, I doubt that."

"You are merely being nice to me because you know I want you to be."

Without awaiting his denial, she led the way directly into her dressing room as being, presumptively, the sole place in all the apartment where seclusion was to be found. In the soft light of it, in the atmosphere of intimacy, Gridley found that the change in her face was not, after all, so remarkable; it seemed no longer hard, nor full, nor discontented. Her violet eyes were softened upon him; the pose of her chin and upper lip was relaxed; it even seemed to him that her proud head was a little bowed. A vision of memory, probably idealized over the distance of time, brought to him now a picture of her when she had failed to take a music prize in school after having blithely considered it safely hers. She was frank in the admission of failure, however unaccustomed to it. What—if any—was her failure now?

Gridley could wait for it.

"How did you know I was in Paris?" he asked by way of diversion.

"Why didn't you tell me you were? Why didn't you come to see me?" she blazed at him temperamentally.

"Was there any use in it after our last—may I call it a conference?"

"Don't be angry with me, Ken. I'm sorry."

Gridley's eyes frankly admired her.

"By Jove, Connie, how human you can be—at times."

"Don't scold me—not to-night, please."

"Anything happened?"

"No, no, Ken."

Gridley studied her, half gratified, half compassionate.

"Except that you've again discovered the vanity of—no, I shan't say it, Connie. Tell me, how did you know I was in Paris?"

"Grendon Paul told me."

"He doesn't know me," Gridley exclaimed.

Constance was impatient of having to give explanations, yet resigned.

"I don't know how it came about. He mentioned it casually. Your being here brought him to Paris, or something. I didn't ask details. You're in the same sort of business, aren't you? International banking? You're still with Penniman? I don't know, Ken. Don't look so—so impatient with me. You can't expect me really to follow those things."

Gridley was staring at her something past propriety, and unaware of the fact until so mildly she took him to task for it.

"Dear Connie, I did not mean to be impatient with you. It wasn't that."

"Well, what was it?"

Gridley pondered his answer. This situation, which so far had been completely clear to him, was suddenly beclouded and fraught with dangerous potentialities. Above all things was it unsafe that Grendon Paul should know anything about the mission that had brought Gridley to Paris; almost as unsafe for Paul to know that Gridley was in Paris on any mission; for men of Paul's caliber had ways of learning things once they realized that discovery was to their advantage. How on earth did the Englishman know that Gridley was in Europe on a special mission? That chance explanation of Constance's put a different complexion not alone on his visit to her, but on what his future attitude toward her might be. Not quite credible to him that she should sink so low as to make of herself a tool

to forward Paul's interests. On the other hand, there was no telling what temptation a man like Grendon Paul might offer her. He was warned to proceed cautiously.

"Is Paul interested in my business?" he asked, rather overdoing nonchalance.

Constance was sincerely surprised.

"Not at all, so far as I know. Why be so—so queer about it?"

"I didn't mean to be, if you'll permit me to repeat myself. I was a little surprised, perhaps, that my paltry affairs could interest a man so great as Grendon Paul." And Gridley was convinced of her innocence.

"You're jealous of him, I believe." And she was plainly eager to have an affirmative answer. Her armor was down to-night.

"I suspect I am," Gridley met her wishes.

"You needn't be. Paul, you know, is nothing to me except his money and his power. Even so, if he had only money, he would mean nothing to me. But his power is amazing—more far-reaching even than you could guess."

"That last I doubt, Connie. At least, I can guess," Gridley said with a very wholesome respect.

"And in return for the sense of sharing it, I give him my fame, and my beauty, and the glory of being my intimate——"

"Oh, Connie," Gridley deprecated.

Whereupon, mistaking the cause of his plaint, she flashed at him again with candor:

"But nothing else of me, Ken, nothing else of me. Nothing, nothing. He wouldn't know how to take—me. Ken, do tell me you believe that."

"Connie, of course I do."

It took a careful scrutiny of him to convince her, and even then one might have guessed that she had convinced herself by her own will.

"Then why," she asked, "play the Pharisee with me?"

Gridley's reply was without palliative.

"Because of your self-conceit, if you want to know. That 'glory of being your intimate' sort of thing."

In which, oddly enough, she found no offense. Gridley marveled at her unusual capacity for chastening to-night. She spoke quite serenely:

"Grendon and I understand one another, at any rate. It is a clear-cut bargain, the terms of which we both tacitly abide by."

"A satisfying bargain?"

"For the most part. Though at times—like to-night—Ken, do you know why I couldn't sing *Thais* to-night?"

"Because Grendon Paul came to Paris, they say, and wanted you to be seen in the box with him." Gridley was in no mood to mince matters. The loveliness of her at this moment made him rebellious at all things that kept her from him, chief of which was herself.

"Good Heavens, is that what they'll be saying?"

"Isn't that what you want them to say? That—yes, that the financial dictator of—well, of certain Central European powers, dictates to you alone of all women? Isn't that what you want them to be saying?"

A long moment she hesitated.

"Yes, perhaps that is what I want them to say. But you, Ken, you know it is not the truth. He can dictate to me in no way. No man can dictate to me. I will tell you the truth, Ken. Because—oh, you won't believe it, I know, but to-night I want to tell you—because suddenly, knowing you were in Paris, knowing of a certainty that you would come to hear me, suddenly I couldn't sing *Thais*; couldn't let you see me converted from what I am, lest to yourself you might say as you have so often warned me: 'That is your fate. If it had been *Gioconda*, or even *Carmen*—but *Thais*—no, not before

you. I couldn't let you see me living a spiritual conversion, Ken."

Gridley took a grip on himself. The soft exquisiteness of her voice, her repentant mood, her all but self-surrender, were casting over him the old spell. And years ago he had made up his mind that it was not safe for him. He combated it by speaking gruffly:

"I doubt if I had come to hear you."

"You would have."

"What's the use of opening it all up again?"

"Then there is still—as you put it—something to open up again?" she asked almost eagerly.

"I think not," he lied in self-defense.

"No, I suppose not," she said with an inflection of sadness that wasn't altogether real.

Gridley noted a subtle change in her. What was acting, and what reality? Was not that continual doubt the chief basis of his insecurity with her? He said nothing.

"No, I suppose not," she repeated. "One hears that you are engaged."

"It is no secret."

"Do you love her?"

"Amazing question."

"I wish you'd tell me about her. I've not met her yet, you know."

"It's not that sort of love, Connie, that makes a man tell about it. Or perhaps, rather, I'm an uncommunicative man. At any rate, I'd prefer not to say anything about her."

"To me—because I'm not worthy of hearing it."

"Nonsense."

"That's the pleasantest thing you've said to me to-night. Tell me this: is she like her aunt Demetra?"

"Do you know Demetra Craven?"

"Is that a parry of my question, or surprise that I should know her?"

"Surprise that you should know her, I believe," said Gridley.

"Why shouldn't I know her? The foremost American novelist"—and that

she said with manifest irony—"resident in France, and the foremost American prima donna—why shouldn't we know one another? No, no, Ken, the truth is, she puts herself out to cultivate, by elaborate entertainments in her château, the very people who put themselves out to get to know me."

Than which, to Gridley's faintly amused satisfaction, there could have been no apter characterization of both women.

"Jean Ballinger," he said rather hastily, "is not at all like Miss Craven, of course."

"She—Miss Ballinger, that is—is visiting Demetra now, is she not, at the Château d'Amont?" Constance asked.

"Yes," Gridley said.

"I think," Constance went on, "that I shall go down and get to know her—Miss Ballinger, I mean. Demetra has been insisting that I visit her, perhaps to show me what the real regal splendor of living in a castle is—as if I couldn't afford it if I wanted it; or perhaps, more likely, to make me the nucleus of a house party such as she couldn't gather together without me. Heretofore, of course, I've refused. Now suddenly I want to go, in order that I may know what Jean Ballinger is like. You don't mind, do you?"

Gridley studied her. Whither was all this tending? To him it seemed suddenly like the throwing down of a gage, that Constance was possessed of one of her temperamental whims to do battle with Jean for himself, not for want of him so much as that she felt herself a woman flouted. But what objection could he make?

"I mind?" he countered. "Why on earth should I mind?"

"I should like to see the two of you together."

Gridley laughed with light scorn.

"To see the two of us billing and cooing, I suppose."

"That's unfair, Ken."

"I beg your pardon."

She was instantly satisfied, or seemed so.

"Now let's get away from personalities, and chat delightfully," she suggested. "You have done me much good, Ken, by coming here. Shall I have some wine in, or sandwiches, or something? Well, then, smoke. And talk to me about—oh, anything. About your business. What is this mysterious and weighty business that fetches you to Europe? Tell me about it. I suddenly find myself most interested." She leaned back wearily in her deep chair and looked at him invitingly from under lowered lids.

"It's not the sort of thing that—that would interest you, Connie." And that was the most he dared say to her with regard to it.

She was plainly about to take issue with him on that point when Grendon Paul's broad, heroic figure appeared in the doorway. Gridley did not know how long he had been standing there. His first view of the Englishman had been by means of the mirror over the mantel. Gridley swung about, of course, to meet him, and thus drew Constance's attention.

"The door was open," said Paul. "I trust I'm not intruding."

Gridley noted that his accent was marred with just a trace of strangeness.

"Yes, you are intruding," Constance said placidly, as if his intrusions were of no more consequence to her than a servant's. "I dare say you wanted something."

"I did want a word with you in private," Paul said, his eyes giving Gridley an unmistakable message.

Constance replied:

"Nothing could be more private than this, Grendon. You know Ken Gridley, do you not?"

Paul and Gridley exchanged acknowledgement of the brief introduction, each fencing with the other.

"What is this momentous communication," Constance asked lazily, "which demands all the privacy of a confessional?"

"If Mr. Gridley would be good enough to withdraw for a moment——" Paul said sharply.

"But he shall do nothing of the sort," said Constance.

"Very well," Paul agreed; and then after a second of delay he continued in less imperious mood: "Montejo suggests a week-end party at Deauville. Are you on?"

There was something about that easy-going colloquialism addressed to Constance that grated on Gridley. That a stranger to himself could talk in that fashion to Constance Farrand seemed to him a sacrilege. He wondered how she would take it. Was that their usual manner of speech between themselves? But, for that matter, why shouldn't it be?

"Was that the message which demanded so much of privacy?" Constance inquired.

"Yes." The Englishman lied patently, in Gridley's opinion; for Gridley was sure that the message was of other import.

"There's no need for so much caution about it," Constance declared. "I've told Ken everything about you and me."

"And what answer," Paul insisted, "shall I give to Montejo?"

Constance thought a moment.

"Tell him no. I am going down to Demetra Craven's for the week-end. I may even stay there a week. I need the rest."

Paul looked incredulous.

"Rather a sudden change, that, eh? You've never before cared to go there," he said.

"Sudden? Yes, perhaps it is. But what of it? I'm going to-morrow. And now please go away and leave Ken and me to chat by ourselves."

CHAPTER III.

Gridley found sleep impossible. How to sleep when he was possessed, mind and body, of that nervous quickening with which she always inspired him. What to do but pace the floor and think fruitlessly? He shouldn't have gone to her. Yet she had needed him. He should have repelled intimacy with her; but after Grendon Paul left she had been as lovable as a child. It was one of the rare occasions when she flew back to him as a refuge from the life she had made for herself, against which at times her instincts rebelled. Gridley tried to analyze his feeling for her into a sort of protective attitude, into a hope that he might sometime save her to her better self. But he knew that was a false estimate. She was not for him—not, at least, as she was. Surrender to that ferment she implanted in him, whether unconsciously or deliberately, would have ended in his own destruction.

With self-debate on this point were intermingled questions of less import but equal poignancy. Grendon Paul's interruption, with its unspoken message, bothered him. Gridley was sure that Paul meant to warn Constance that she should not talk too much of business affairs with himself; and Paul was a dangerous man to have as a rival in any financial deal. And again that adamant determination of Connie's to go down to Demetra Craven's was not a pleasant prospect to contemplate. His mind ran a weary circle.

Fruitless wrestlings, vain of resolution! Things were as they were. Pacing a hotel room would not solve them. The first faint light of dawn showed over the Arc de Triomphe. Gridley was amazed to find it nearly five o'clock. A hundred kilometers or so to Châteaudun; two hours to Jean Ballinger, who would give him instant peace and security. Half an hour later found Gridley on his way thither, in a long-

hooded, eager Darracq, whose chauffeur gladly gave Gridley the wheel as soon as they were past the outer boulevards.

The city of Châteaudun was still sleepy, though the golden autumn sun was two hours high, when Gridley stopped in the outskirts and there inquired, diffidently lest the place be not known to the city at large, for Demetra Craven. All doubts of the notoriety of the Château d'Amont were dissipated, however, when the first man he addressed for directions lifted his arm to a steep, wooded height beyond the city, from which the turreted pile of masonry had for centuries commanded the sweep of the Loire's loveliest tributary. Through the city, then, without a stop for breakfast Gridley pushed the car with impatient eagerness, and up the winding road that lifted him abruptly from the river. Laved clean of doubts and fears by the swift rush of air, it seemed to him as if the road were lifting him indeed into another world.

Into which, to carry out his vision, Jean Ballinger welcomed him. Even as the car stopped between the ancient crenelated towers that formed the gateway she came out from among the late hydrangeas that bordered the drive within the walls, a young, slim, vital figure who walked as must have walked Diana in her youth. A mere girl, one thought her at first sight, and her unusual physical appearance compelled attention which, in turn, intrigued closer study and left one with a vague sense of bafflement in any attempt to subsume her to a known type. Slumbrous brown eyes with long, slow-moving lashes, a facial contour of Rosetti's *Beatrice*—these gave to her an aspect of spirituality which, indeed, her love for Gridley had augmented. But in combination with these there was red hair held in proud poise, an alluring shortness of upper lip that never quite met the lower, a depth of chest and a swinging gait as

she walked that made her very much of the company of mortals. Out of a vast vagueness of impression that she gave, one could only say haltingly and inadequately that here was a woman who when she willed could walk with the gods. To Gridley she meant peace and honor, content and achievement, self-realization in its highest form, a promise that with her all would be well with him throughout time into eternity.

"Jean, dear," cried Gridley, "imagine you out here to meet me, and at this hour of the morning!"

"I had a feeling you were coming to me."

"I've raced to you, and I think the miles were never so long."

"Is everything right with you?"

"Not too well, Jean."

She studied him. It was as if in a flash she knew him through and through.

"Business?" she asked, nevertheless.

"Rather muddled. Monsieur Ribasse is helping me tremendously. He's got me lists of all the French bondholders—and you know how these saving investors scatter the issue from end to end of the country by buying one bond each—so that is in itself no small matter. And a couple of the largest bondholders he's already won over at my price. But all this must bore you."

"No, it doesn't bore me, but it doesn't particularly interest me because I know it will be all right. There's nothing else troubling you?"

"Nothing—of any importance," Gridley said truthfully, for Constance Farrand and her allurements seemed very far away now.

"What is it?"

"Sagacious woman that you are," Gridley smiled, "I believe you know already."

"No, except that there is something. Don't tell if you don't want to."

"It's nothing at all, really. I went to see Constance Farrand last night.

Supper in her apartment; big party of notables; and all that sort of thing. She asked me; I couldn't well refuse. I'll explain how it was. You see——" he began.

"Why should you explain anything? I'm glad you went. Tell me about it. Who was there?"

Gridley's recital of the event was objective and impersonal. In his expurgated account there was nothing of purpose to deceive Jean who, of course, never really knew in concrete totality Gridley's attitude toward Constance. His account presented personalities other than his own merely because, in the bland security of being with Jean, Constance was very dim and far away, and that tantalizing intimacy with her of the night before suddenly lost all significance. He concluded his story with:

"And she's coming down here to stay with your aunt for a week. Or did you know it?"

For the briefest instant Jean's slumbrous eyes flamed with a question, but immediately and quite placidly she said:

"How jolly. No, I didn't know it. Aunt Demetra didn't tell me, of course."

"Perhaps Aunt Demetra doesn't yet know it. It appears to be a sort of standing invitation," Gridley said with a touch of levity not conveyed in the words.

"I hope she'll sing."

"I think very likely she will," said Gridley, with a sort of after-smile at his own irony. "And she'll probably play golf, and tramp, and read, and perhaps take a hand at tennis——"

"Does she do all those things?"

"When she wants to. I have a notion that's what she's coming down to do." Just now Gridley could foresee in smug security Constance's studied rivalry with Jean. And after so close an approach to the danger line he added: "She says

she needs a rest—rustication, I suppose, exercise."

"What a marvelous woman she must be to be able to do all those things."

Gridley had had enough of Constance. "D'you know," said he, "I'm suddenly ravenous."

"You've never driven all the way from Paris this morning without breakfast?"

"As completely breakfastless as if coffee were on the dry list."

"That we shall soon remedy. And I say, do let me drive up to the door, won't you? That car of yours looks a stunning animal to have one's toe on."

Followed breakfast, a hodgepodge of crisp bacon and crisper banter in a sunny alcove off the great refectory whence kings had gone forth to court and crusaders to battle.

Demetra Craven came in upon them later, a figure that, with her large and breezy masculinity, was delightfully incongruous in that setting. Being a novelist, however, enbowed with munificent royalties and undisputed popularity, she had imagination enough to see herself as a chatelaine in the grand manner. On this morning, for example, she wore a trailing gown of white, fine wool, caught about her mature and unconfined waist with a silken rope from which depended a jangling bunch of keys. To the discerning, her satisfaction in her rôle was sometimes mildly ludicrous. For the rest she was unmoral, lazy of mind in her affluence, excessively romantic, and given to rhapsodizing.

She quoted softly as she approached them:

"There is sweet music here that softer falls Than petals from blown roses on the grass."

Gridley, who had not before met Aunt Demetra in the flesh, was at something of a loss for a proper reply to this welcome. Not so Jean, whose reply was ready:

"The noise you heard, Aunt Demetra, was only toast being crunched."

"But the mere crunching of toast," rejoined Aunt Demetra unabashed, "at the meeting of lovers, is music to the ears of such as I."

"Jolly fine music, I dare say, for Ken, who was as hungry as a bear. Fancy, he'd driven all the way from Paris this morning without a morsel of breakfast."

"Laudable haste, sir. It is as much as ten days, isn't it, since you saw Jean?"

"Quite," laughed Gridley, trying in vain to meet her on her own ground. "May I say that it has seemed as many centuries?"

"What nonsense, Ken. You don't yet know what a century is. How can a thing 'seem' which you haven't experienced?"

"Lovers' vision is the real truth, Jeannie," Aunt Demetra said oracularly. "I wonder much that he finds anything to admire in you, who lack so grievously any appreciation of romance."

Gridley was still stricken dumb by his welcome, and was rather shamefaced about it. Jean came to his rescue:

"Did you know, Aunt Demetra, that Constance Farrand is coming down for a visit?"

Aunt Demetra was instantly very much the woman of the world.

"Not really," she said with manifest delight.

"Ken brought the news," Jean explained matter-of-factly. "He saw her last night."

Which drew Aunt Demetra's gentle eyes upon him with an expression which plainly said: "This sort of thing is most unusual and should bear looking into." What she did say, however, was:

"Did she really say she was coming to visit me, Mr. Gridley?"

"Ah—yes," Gridley said, a trifle uncomfortably. He found nothing more to say.

"And did she say when?"

"Immediately. Still, you never can tell about her. She's most capricious."

"I wish she might have given me a longer notice."

"Why?" Jean asked with a definite show of interest.

"So that I might have some one here worth while for her to meet. If I don't, she'll be saying I know no one worth while, and tossing her head over me on that account."

"Why worry?" Jean wanted to know. "I'm here; and Mr. Kenehan Gridley's here; and you're here; and if she isn't interested, let her go."

Aunt Demetra was suddenly revived.

"Excuse me for the moment. I want to send some telegrams. I'll manage to get some one here." She hurried away, forgetting that suavity of gait that was the part of the chatelaine.

CHAPTER IV.

Grendon Paul knew Constance well enough not to dare outstay her guests that evening, however important it was for him to have a confidential word with her. He did, however, tip her maid to call him by telephone as soon as she was astir the next day, and was surprised at the earliness of the hour when the call came to him.

She would see him, of course. He found her already dressed for motoring, and patently impatient to be off as soon as her car should arrive.

"You haven't come," she greeted him, "to try to argue me into the Deauville party with Montojo?"

"I credit myself with being too sagacious to try to argue you into or out of anything."

"What then?"

With deliberation he chose a chair somewhat away from her, in the shadows of the center of the drawing-room, whence he might the more carefully watch her face as she sat near the

window. It was an untried course he was about to embark on.

"May I inquire if this man Gridley is in love with you?"

"Extraordinary question. Yes, of course he is."

"It happens, you know," said he after another second of thought, "that he and I have come into direct rivalry."

"Oh, no, never," declared Constance cordially. "Let there be no mistake about you and me."

"Oh, not in that way. We understand one another, at any rate. No, no. It is another affair of which I speak—business."

"Then why bother me with it?"

"Will you not at least talk with me in friendly fashion of it?"

"Until my car comes, yes." She looked impatiently out of the window.

"Did you, by any chance, tell him last night that I was interested in him? That I asked you about him?"

"So that is why you wanted to speak with me confidentially last night."

"Yes."

"He inquired how I knew he was in Paris, and I told him that you had told me."

"I wish you hadn't. I am afraid it will put him on his guard against me."

"So much the better—for sake of fair play, at any rate."

"It happens to be of vast importance to me that he be not forewarned."

She shrugged her shoulders with a new access of impatience.

"I'm not at all concerned with business. Your name will probably never be mentioned between us again, if that is any comfort to you."

"Yes, to some extent, at least," said he, and spent seconds in planning his next speech. "American business men have a way, have they not, of confiding their business—as being the most interesting topic of conversation at their command—to their women folk?"

"Not Kenahan Gridley."

"Oh, then you know nothing of his affairs?"

"I? I know nothing. It doesn't interest me, I repeat."

"Would it be so very difficult for you to—learn from him something about his mission in Paris?"

"Probably not if I cared to. Why? What is it?"

"I must admit I don't know. I am afraid he is stealing a march on me."

"On you? And you so clever?" she asked.

"It was his very obscurity in the financial world that permitted any such slackness on my part."

"You begin to interest me. What is it all about? Imagine Ken Gridley big enough man to come to blows with you. What is it?"

"I tell you, I don't know. Amazingly enough, he has come to France and worked deftly and quietly and with astonishing success in getting options on the external indebtedness bonds of Istria, held now by French investors. And because of the old friendship between France and Istria, that means that Gridley controls, or will soon control, practically all of Istria's foreign debt. But why? For what reason? What does he plan to do?" In his excitement—a surrender to emotion that stamped him as decidedly not English—Paul rose from his chair and began to pace the room. "It baffles me completely, and yet it is of the utmost importance to me to know. I know that Penniman is behind him. But for what? What is it they have in mind, your friend Gridley and that old wolf Penniman? And I have vast investments to guard there, to say nothing of vested interests and a political situation of the greatest delicacy."

"Bravo for Ken. I didn't know he was so big a man," Constance interjected.

Paul stopped in surprise.

"But surely, in view of the intimacy

of our friendship, the amount of money——"

She interrupted him with a laugh:

"Yes, the amount of money you have spent on me. Go on."

"Surely," he went on unabashed, "you must have some consideration for my interests. You don't love him, do you?"

Futile question to ask such a woman.

"Love him? No. Of course not."

And Paul, after scrutiny, was convinced.

"Then I have at least something of an advantage over him—that of intimacy with you, something which passes for friendship, your sense of due consideration of my interests."

"All that was never in our bargain."

"But is it too late to write it in? Are you altogether inhuman?"

"No. Just uninterested, except that it's something of a surprise to know that Ken Gridley has come to be a seriously considered rival of yours. I should like to see the best man win; more than that——" The gesture of her lovely shoulders rendered unnecessary the completion of her statement.

Paul for a moment lost that carefully maintained poise that he knew would be essential to the making of any pact with her.

"You are a baffling woman. There is no moving you."

"I stand strictly by my bargain with you, at any rate."

"Then let us make a further bargain," he suggested after a space. "Let us put it bluntly. I will give you the Jaunpur rubies of the Hapsburgs."

"The Jaunpur rubies? You haven't them."

"I have—at my disposal—on demand."

Covetousness was in her eyes, a suddenly compelling desire for that which he offered. It was one of those rare occasions when her sincere feelings overwhelmed her habit of acting.

"Yes, you would have them. But for what would you give them me?"

"For discovering to me what it is that your friend Gridley has in mind, and perhaps for some general services in the same affair thereafter. Just what, I don't now know. Nothing, however, that you cannot easily perform and still maintain your standing."

No mood of hers, no words could have been more unexpected than those with which she answered him:

"You'd buy me, Constance Farrand, to be your tool and your dupe?"

"You put it far too bluntly. This is no ordinary case——"

"As ordinary as that of the meanest spy."

"Is it so far different from the favor you rendered me in the affair of Martinaio? And for which you took no specific—ah—reward?"

"No different, no—perhaps. But I am somehow changed." Then her voice rose in a gust of anger that was new to him: "It's an outrage and an insult that you have done me. Me—Constance Farrand! Do you realize who I am and what I am?"

"Insult? A simple affair——"

"Insult! Bringing me down to the level of a spy! Me—Constance Farrand!"

"You are rather a casuist, I think."

"Can't you comprehend that I want you to go at once? Or must I debase myself still further by having the servants put you out?"

"That is a question readily answered. I regret my error; that should go without saying." Still he lingered. What to say to restore their relationship? All this had been most unexpected to him. She was worth a man's completest surrender—superficially. "I begin to understand how grossly I have insulted you. My estimate of you has increased a hundredfold. I shall not again make the error."

He anticipated no reply, and received

none. He was wise enough to know that, with her, the affair was settled. But for him, the matter of Gridley's unusual business in France was not so lightly to be passed over. He had not overstated his concern about it. It might be vital to a degree which he alone knew.

For the shadowy figure of Grendon Paul—man of mystery as to his source and his precipitous rise to power, Englishman yet plainly not Englishman—cut athwart the political life of Central Europe like that of a sinister ogre or of a benign protector, according to the political opinions one held. Gridley was right when he told Constance that he could guess at the extent of Paul's financial influence, but not he, nor any one else, could do more than that. Odd circumstance, meaning everything or nothing, that his present investments abroad, his vast holdings in Russia, in Galicia, and all the small states neighboring thereto, should so exactly correspond with the pre-war holdings of a certain deposed pre-war emperor. Of all that, however, nothing proven, nothing known. Suffice it to say that, from whatever source derived, his power was a concrete and colossal fact. Those who romanced about him might call him merely an agent of—whomever; but those who dealt with him were forced to deal with him as with one of the six most important men in Europe to-day.

And for some or all of the reasons hidden behind all these speculations and facts Paul sent a wire to Neuchâtel in Switzerland, in reply to which there came to Paris, on the next train, a man of such distinguished bearing and imposing mien that one might have called it incredible that such a man should be at the beck and call of Grendon Paul. From the Gare de l'Est, near midnight though it was, the man went straight to Paul's suite at the Meurice; and there Paul was waiting for him.

Paul signified his welcome merely by

a satisfied glance at his watch. He waved his guest to a chair.

"You're prompt, Ferenczy," said Paul.

"The train was on time."

Ferenczy did not sit down. His standing erect, however, did not convey the impression that he considered himself inferior to his host, and therefore not worthy to sit before him; rather the effect of his erect, martial figure with one great hand on Paul's table was that he resented being commanded thus summarily, by a wave of the hand, to sit down. Even Paul seemed somehow minimized before him.

"How do you like exile in Switzerland?" Paul asked a trace more affably.

"You can imagine how I like it: utterly alone in the world, at the very crest of the tide of life and only the ebb in prospect, and that life devoted only to such service of my country as heretofore she has been glad to have from me—"

"Enough. Enough. I take it that you do not care for Switzerland."

"I care for no place but Istria. Switzerland, France, England—they are all one, that is to say all nothing, to me."

"I have a change in view for you."

"Repatriation?"

"Yes."

"With power?"

"Of course. You in Istria without power there—unthinkable. Well, I suppose that is why you have been exiled."

"Thanks."

"By the way, will you smoke?"

"No, thanks." The Count Ferenczy's eager eyes, from their flaming depths, were burning into Paul's; yet he said no word that would prompt his host to an exposition of the plan.

"I expect some return for my offices in your behalf," Paul said.

"Very naturally."

"The fact is, there is an American chap here in France, named Gridley,

who is buying up all Istria's foreign indebtedness bonds now in the hands of French investors."

The query was urged from Ferenczy's lips:

"Why? For what reason?"

"Ah, you perceive the momentousness of the possibilities, I see."

"Of course. But why? An American—"

"That is what I want you to find out. It has possibilities that are most disturbing, and I can get not the slightest inkling of his motives, so that my hands are completely tied when it comes to dealing with him."

"You'd make a spy of me?"

"How do you know that Istria's welfare is not at stake?"

"Or," said Ferenczy with something of a slur, "your interests there jeopardized? Still, I am listening. Why call on me when you have a most efficient secret service of your own for such work?"

"Gridley is too clever for the ordinary paid spy. Call yourself rather a diplomat with his country's welfare at stake, than a spy."

"Very well," said Ferenczy with unwilling resignation. "And how do you suppose that I go about discovering the *raison d'être* of this affair of the American's?"

"That works itself out rather easily, really. Let me tell you in a few words. Gridley is staying for the next few days, at any rate, at the castle of an American woman in France. I can arrange it that you will be asked there as a privileged guest."

"But how? I do not know this American woman."

"It has only to be hinted to her that you would come to her, and she would pave your way with orchids. That I have attended to in my own fashion. Suffice it that you have your invitation, and will be treated there like the man you are. But let me tell you of the

situation there. It is fortunate for me that I had you to call upon to carry out this mission. One of your fellow guests there will be Constance Farrand, the——"

"Not the diva?"

"Yes, exactly. And, fortunately, she has confided to me that, to her mind, you are one of the few men in Europe in all respects worth knowing. I will frankly say that I have not previously arranged a meeting between you for reasons of my own. You and I, of course, are not the best of friends—for friendship's sake. But no matter about that."

"Miss Farrand does me too great honor. But how, may I ask, does she enter into the affair?"

"Gridley is in love with her." Paul shot the words at him dramatically.

"Ah."

There was something in that exclamation that made Paul hurry on:

"But it may not be necessary to bring her into it at all. You may be able to handle the Gridley affair quite by yourself."

"Yes."

"And in return, I am prepared to offer you return from exile, and to back you for the premiership if you can stand for it."

"The premiership?"

"Yes. Provided, that is, you conduct the Gridley affair as seems right to keep American influence out of Istria."

"You state the case plainly, at least," Ferenczy said.

"Does the portfolio appeal to you?"

"It is worth taking on for a time, at least. When do I go to your American woman's château?"

"To-morrow morning. It is already arranged. To-day I sent her this wire: 'May I visit you on behalf of an Istrian charity?' Signed, Vladimir, Herzog von Ferenczy. I tell you this, of course, only to prepare you for what is coming."

Ferency's disapproval was evident, yet as evidently swallowed.

"And her answer?"

Paul picked up the folded blue sheet that lay on the table near him.

"Read it," said he. "I picked it up at the legation myself, the better to assure you."

Ferency read:

VLADIMIR, HERZOG VON FERENCY,

Istrian Legation, Paris.

Honored and delighted to welcome you to the Château d'Amont at your earliest convenience. I am bold enough to suggest an immediate visit because of certain guests whom you may find particularly agreeable.

DEMETRA CRAVEN.

CHAPTER V.

Gridley and Jean Ballinger came back from their first long canter through the forest and along the river to find Demetra Craven in rather solitary splendor in the castle's domed reception hall, giving tea to Constance Farrand. In the presence of a guest so discerning as she, Demetra had for the moment dropped her pose of chatelaine, and had become the conventional woman of her years and fame. Her introduction was in keeping:

"You know Kenahan Gridley, I believe. And knowing him, I dare say you have at least heard of my niece, Miss Ballinger."

"Frankly," returned Constance, "I've heard almost nothing of her. It was largely to know her better that I came down to visit you." She subjected Jean to a scrutiny that must have been embarrassing, the studied intentness of which she mitigated with no words. Rather she spoke to Gridley, even as she looked at Jean: "How d'you do, Ken? You didn't expect me so soon, did you?"

Gridley muttered some inanity; he was too vexed at Constance for her rudeness, to make any reply really suitable and at the same time decorous.

Of Jean, however, he was proud when she said:

"I can imagine that Ken would talk very little of me when he is with you." Which meant nothing at all to Demetra Craven; but Gridley, knowing Jean as few others knew her, detected beneath the words that subtle irony which made it the perfect rebuff to Constance.

Constance's finely attuned perceptions caught the implication. "You are wise beyond your years, then, if you know already that every woman has a different importance to a man."

"But each, I think, must have either a waxing or a waning importance. It can never be static," Jean said suavely.

"By Jove, this dissecting business, you know, is most enlightening," Gridley put in, "but what about some tea, Aunt Demetra. I'm sure you must be famished, Jean. D'you know, Connie, she's done eighteen miles stirrup to stirrup with me this afternoon?"

"That's awfully good for you, Ken," Constance said. "Between us, I think we'll make you quite fit this week."

"You're staying with us a week, then?" Jean asked.

"Except that I must sing *Thais* Tuesday night. Miss Craven has been good enough to insist that I come back here after that."

"Splendid," Jean said almost too demurely. "I hope we shall be able to interest you a little. It's mostly background here, and very little high relief."

Constance looked at her sharply again. It was clear that Jean baffled her. In Gridley's eyes there was a flicker of amusement at the situation. Constance saw this, and was instantly sweet to Jean. Thereafter tea proceeded as it should. Constance and Demetra made most of the talk. Gridley came in occasionally with a light comment. Jean smoked quietly as if she were basking in the luxury of healthy fatigue; but through her lazy-lidded eyes she watched Constance with interest.

After tea the four of them, in the late warm haze of the Indian summer evening, wandered about the grounds adjacent to the castle. Constance appeared to be spellbound by Demetra's tales of the history and traditions of the place. Her undivided attention to her hostess threw Gridley with Jean: not incredibly—or so Gridley thought—a shrewd plan of Connie's.

"And what," Gridley asked Jean in an undertone on one of these occasions, "do you think of her?"

"A magnificent woman."

Queer that every one applied the same adjective to her. Yet Gridley was not satisfied.

"I feel that there is something behind that, Jean. You say it without enthusiasm, somehow."

Jean thought for a moment, then replied:

"I can understand why she is so successful."

"Natural talent, of course, plus an inordinate capacity for application."

"More than that, Ken."

"And what more?"

"Because she is so utterly ruthless in getting whatever she wants," Jean said quietly.

Which rather surprised Gridley. He studied Jean's face, which, uplifted and so silhouetted in the twilight against the solid blackness of a close-clipped cedar, seemed more than ever just now to be that of Rosetti's *Beatrice*.

"And there is something yet behind that, Jean," he declared.

"No, nothing behind that, except that I know, as you do, what it is she wants. Let us drop the subject now."

Constance came in to dinner splendidly; no jewels, of course, save an emerald fillet in her blond hair, and in a gown of some dark-hued iridescence that suggested her mood and played the perfect foil to her personality. The shades of old guests in that great oaken-beamed refectory, looking down upon

the small, dimly-lighted table, might have got the sense that there was no one in the room but her, nor had ever been an equal to her. And yet Constance made of herself a delightful and agreeable companion, flashing at times with her superb vigor of mind and soul, but for the most part as tranquilizing as Jean herself.

To Gridley, little by little, as he watched her in sheer fascination came back the old ferment. Magnificent woman that she was, what might not be in store for the man—and he himself was that man—who could possess her?

"Heady stuff, this Burgundy of yours, Aunt Demetra," he found himself saying, as the man filled his glass again. "What is it?"

"Clos Vougeot '68. I understand from the agent that Louis Napoleon used to come to the duc merely because that wine was in the cellars."

"Louis Napoleon?" queried Jean simply.

After dinner Constance played and sang: Scotch songs and bits from the lighter Italian operas. Then, rising abruptly from the bench, she said:

"Ken, will you walk with me on the terrace?" She went to the high windows, threw them wide open with a dramatic gesture to let a flood of moonlight in, and stood looking out quite as if Gridley's acquiescence were a matter of course and of no interest to any one else in the room.

"Yes," said Gridley, and followed her out along the balcony. Impossible to refuse her, impossible to make excuses for leaving, in view of the way she had couched her request. And Gridley was rather tumultuously glad.

Down the broad stone steps she led the way, and into the bricked path that led in a maze amongst the shrubbery and so out into the formal gardens. She caught Gridley's arm.

"I've not been so happy in years, Ken.

You—and all this—have shut out all that back there”—she pointed Parisward—“the sham of it, the posing, the eternal insincerity, and striving for effect, and vainglory, and all the rest that you detest.”

“Connie! Yet—yet it wouldn't last—with you. It's a spell. The spell is on me, I think. Let's not talk of it. Let's talk of—”

“Take the spell as it comes and be sure it will come again. What matters what's between? This is worth all the rest. This blots out all the rest.”

“It can't last. Connie, I know.”

“You know! Ken, dear, you know too much; don't be always 'knowing.' Can't you sometimes feel?”

“You make me 'feel' too much; that's why it's dangerous. It is dangerous, Connie. Tell me, what do you think of Jean?”

They were walking slowly now; Connie's arm was closer pressed against him.

“Of Jean?” she said. “I don't know. Does it matter? Why should she matter to you—or to me?”

“But you came down here—”

“I came down here for you—you in this setting. Ken, stop a moment.” She checked his slow walk and faced him where the moon, through a rift in an ancient, low-spread yew, shone directly on her.

To Gridley here was suddenly a vision of surpassing loveliness. He closed his eyes against it.

“Connie, you know,” he murmured, “it's—it's somehow unfair. Unfair. I have an inkling—some dim idea—I can't express it—unfair, not right of you now after all that is past—Jean back there—”

“What question of fairness or unfairness, Ken, can there be? We've always loved one another. I may have forgotten at times. It's always been there—”

Gridley looked at her now.

“Yes, you forgot in times past; and how much—in the future?”

“You can save me from myself, Ken.”

“Connie, it's not safe, not secure.”

“I think I've never wanted anything so much as to have your arms about me.” She put her hands on his shoulders.

“Connie!”

“Then—”

“Oh, Connie, I wish I knew.”

“You do know, don't you? The one thing I've wanted, perhaps not knowing—not ever knowing so well as I know now. Ken, dear, if you would look at me, you would know.”

Still a man blinded by will, he raised his hands to hers where they lay on his shoulders; and, however tense himself, he gently removed them and put them from him.

“No, Connie.”

“Ken!”

“No, Connie.”

“You didn't say 'no' to me. You can't say 'no' to me. You can't. I want you so.”

“Let us go back in.”

She stepped back from him a pace, and looked at him incredulously; then, convinced of the unbelievable, she spoke rather sharply:

“My acting wasn't quite up to par, was it, Ken?”

“Was it acting?” Gridley asked, though with no interest.

She laughed.

“Of course. Did you suppose that I, Constance Farrand, would offer herself to a man who would refuse her?”

“Let us go in,” Gridley repeated.

“I suppose you do want to. You are vastly upset, Ken. I must have been more than a little convincing. This has been your great hour, Ken.”

“A memorable one.”

In silence they retraced their steps, mounted the massive balcony, and entered at the window whence so short a time before they had emerged. At first

glance it appeared to them that neither Demetra nor Jean were in the room. In a momentary surrender to her alarm, Constance again caught Gridley by the arm:

"Could they have followed us?" she asked in an undertone.

"To see your acting?" Gridley wondered at the incredible, himself faintly amused.

Then Jean, hearing them, revealed herself. A hand first, stretched out to the back of the deep sofa whereon she had been lying before the fireplace, so as to pull her to a sitting posture. Approaching her, they saw that she had been reading as she lay there. She looked—or was it Gridley's imagination—drawn and very pale. Nevertheless she spoke warmly:

"I hadn't an idea that the moon would let you two come in so soon."

"It was a trifle damp," Constance explained, "and I had no wrap."

Jean's quick glance from Constance to Gridley and back again was eloquent. But her only speech was entirely non-committal. She asked:

"Shall I have a fire lighted?"

"Please," said Constance.

Jean addressed Gridley:

"Ken, do you mind pulling that gorgeous silken rope hanging by the door? It should in time bring a servant, and the servant will in time fetch wood, and so we may hope eventually to have a fire."

Constance examined Jean's book:

"What is that you are reading, dear?" she asked.

"The 'Temptation of Saint Anthony,'" said Jean.

"Extraordinary thing for you to be interested in."

"Why?" asked Jean.

"The untamable man is such a myth."

"A myth—really?" asked Jean, meeting Constance's eyes squarely.

CHAPTER VI.

Gridley's repudiation of her was the sorest wound that Constance Farrand had ever known. She had loved him passionately at that moment, as occasionally and intermittently she did love him, and him alone of all men. As her self-pride rebelled against permitting him to see how he had hurt her, so her vanity made him suddenly the most detestable of men; and this fact as well she was at pains to conceal from him. She could not now leave Demetra's with her pride intact; and how could she stay on and see herself playing the second fiddle to Jean Ballinger? To her in this mood the coming of Ferenczy, as announced that evening by Demetra Craven, was nothing short of a Heaven-sent balm: a man worth while for her to turn her attention to; some one because of whom she might make Gridley jealous; some one, finally, whom she had long wanted to add to her train and who had thus far escaped her.

For to her Ferenczy was one of the most romantic men in Europe; more than that, one still of marvelous potentialities for achievement. The aura of romance surrounded him in her esteem because he was one of that race of half a dozen men still living who, powerful in the pre-war days of monarchies and empires, had dictated alike to people and to kings, and who now, fallen from high estate through exile and the unimaginable turning of fate's wheel, led dreary lives of waiting and vain memories. Such men were old Sassonoff, already of her train; the Count Apponyi, whose asceticism barred him; the Baron Sonnino and Johann Kretsch. Of such caliber was Ferenczy. The Mussolinis, the Kemals, the Grendon Pauls of the post-war period were worthy of her attention because they had power; the Ferenczys and the Sassonoffs were the more worthy of it because they deserved the power they had lost, and might by her be inspired to

regain it. A purely selfish point of view in reality, because she expected to be carried to the crest of power with them and thus further to feed her vanity. Ferenczy's coming to the Château d'Amont was indeed a god-send.

Into such fertility of situation came Ferenczy, fired anew with ambition and anew with that desire of serving his country that only a Slav can feel. Himself of a magnificence of mind and aspiration, what more fitting than that in Constance he should find a perfect companion? The more as she appeared to know, better than most women, the history and the politics and the needs of his country, and his own life story with its hopes and dreams and constant struggles.

Ferenczy did not for a moment forget his real mission to the Château d'Amont. As a matter of principle he preferred not to use the woman, as Grendon Paul had suggested, until all other subterfuge was exhausted. Hence the first few hours of his stay were devoted in the main to cultivating Gridley, with a view to knowing the man and finding a point of attack. He found Gridley suave and amiable, an excellent companion; and, with all the arts he possessed, sought to ingratiate himself with this strange American business man who, oddly enough, was poking a curious finger into political finance. Putting together what he had read of American business men, and what he knew of Gridley's personality, he had no doubt but that his own superior training in diplomacy would without difficulty render to him what he sought. And as the two smoked alone after their first dinner together he casually inquired:

"Is it business or pleasure that brings you to France?"

"Business, mostly."

"Ah! May I inquire——"

"Yes, you may inquire. Unfortunately it is not all mine to tell. With

so much cleared away, I think we shall be good friends."

"Do you mean to suggest, monsieur, that I had anything more than the most impersonal interest in your affairs?"

"I didn't mean to suggest it."

"I thought your answer implied it."

"I would make the same answer to any one. I shall go even further in answering you, now that misunderstanding has arisen. I will state it plainly, as a fact, that you, an Istrian, undoubtedly have a very deep personal interest in my reasons for buying up Istria's foreign indebtedness. I trust there is nothing more to be said upon the subject between you and me. By the way, Count Vladimir, do you ride before breakfast?"

"Ride—before breakfast?" stammered Ferenczy, taken completely off his guard.

"Yes. Miss Craven has an Irish hunter which I wish you'd try out. Sixteen hands, rawboned, fiery brute. He led me a merry chase yesterday."

Ferenczy's graven, astonished face, relaxed into the slightest, yet pleasantest, of smiles.

"Horses aside for the moment, monsieur, may I express to you how much of added esteem I suddenly have for you? And now, yes, I will try the Irish hunter before breakfast to-morrow morning. Let Istria and her foreign bonds rest in peace henceforth between us."

Thus Ferenczy got out of a difficult situation as best he could. He was heartily sincere, to be sure, in his asseveration of a new respect for Gridley, and at the same time glad enough to save what he could of his own dignity. Balked along this avenue to success, he overcame his scruples of using a woman in furthering his affairs, and planned the inveigling of Constance. That was not difficult. Already she had expressed her eagerness to see him reinstated in his own country. Thence it

was but a step in advance to apprise her of his pact with Grendon Paul. The opportunity came next morning when, safely out of earshot, he sat with Constance watching Jean and Gridley playing tennis.

"Did Grendon Paul tell you that I would help you?" Constance asked with unexpected sharpness after Ferenczy had deftly led up to, and stated, the proposition.

"No, mademoiselle; nor have I asked you to help. I am merely telling you what lies between this, and that which so ardently you have desired for me."

"Did you know that Grendon Paul asked me to do the same thing for him?"

"No, mademoiselle," said Ferenczy, and not even Constance could doubt him.

"He tried to buy me, you know; offered me something or other—some paltriness: the Jaunpur rubies, as I remember."

Ferenczy was more than a little cast down.

"He should have known better."

"How could he know better? He is an upstart."

"Imagine trying to buy a woman like you! Let us say no more about it."

"Do you mean that?"

"How can I convince you? Perhaps by frank confession, mademoiselle. Will you listen to me? I will admit that Paul——"

"Yes, yes; I knew that. I could guess it, at any rate. But never mind. I know as well the urge that dictates to you. I feel, of course, that the whole affair—this spying—is repugnant in the extreme to you."

"Mademoiselle, you are unbelievably charitable and sympathetic. Think no more of it, I beg of you. It is a higher price than I care to pay, to embroil you in an affair of this nature."

"But if I choose to take it upon myself, you can feel no guilt."

"How can you choose to take it upon

yourself, for admittedly no reward, when once you have refused to do it for a very considerable reward?"

She eyed him sharply.

"Are you, too, in danger of misunderstanding me?"

He bowed gravely.

"I think not. It was an unconsidered statement that I made. I would not, at least, make the error of offering you——"

"Let me make myself plain. There is a difference between taking jewels for myself, and giving you what is rightly yours."

"Your magnanimity, mademoiselle——"

She interrupted him impatiently, though with half-closed eyes she watched Gridley's vain effort to kill one of Jean's low returns.

"There is a difference," she went on, "between putting you in your proper place in the world, and lining old Penniman's pockets with Istrian money. At least, I suppose that, in some fashion, Penniman sees profit in it for himself. It must be that motive that has brought Ken Gridley over here, don't you think?"

"It's entirely baffling; but what else can it be? Your American millionaires——"

"Of course; of course. Yes, things have changed very much since I refused Grendon Paul's offer. And though I would not accept it, if he offered it to me again, nevertheless for you——"

"Changed? How changed?" Ferenczy asked.

"No matter. A man of your ability should not be shut out from his real place in the world, in order that a bank clerk may carry out his superior's orders and get, perhaps, a raise in salary." And even Ferenczy was surprised at her scorn.

"Your benevolence surpasses belief," he exclaimed, nevertheless.

"Yes, I shall help you," she declared simply.

"May I warn you before you resolve that it will be no simple affair? Monsieur Gridley, however much or little he may be in America, has a wit, a shrewdness, beyond the ordinary. May I tell you how he met my first approach to him?"

"Do."

She listened, faintly amused in spite of his tone of respect.

"No one," she said, "but me could drag from Ken Gridley what he doesn't want to tell."

"Perhaps, even, no one at all. If you fail, mademoiselle, believe me that I shall know you have done more than any one else could do."

"I shall not fail."

CHAPTER VII.

On Tuesday Constance and Ferenczy motored to Paris for Constance's appearance in "Thais." Jean would have gone, but Demetra Craven could not. It seemed almost as if Constance had arranged that Demetra could not go, for she had suddenly become rather liberal in transferring to Demetra her own social world. Her intimate train, including Sassonoff, de Montojo, and Carolius, the young Bulgarian chargé d'affaires in Paris, were scheduled to arrive at the Château d'Amont on Tuesday afternoon, to spend the rest of the week. And Demetra had to be there, of course, to welcome them. Constance did offer Jean the hospitality of her apartment, but with a half-heartedness that forestalled acceptance.

Gridley, of course, preferred to stay in the country. No pressing business called him to Paris, pending the receipt of a wire from Monsieur Ribasse, who had been good enough to look diligently after his interests while he awaited developments. Gridley, as it chanced, was thrown alone with Constance for a few

minutes just after lunch before she started.

"As the self-appointed guardian of my moral welfare, Ken," she said lightly, "do you really disapprove of my friendship with the Count Vladimir?"

"I disapprove? What gives you that idea?"

"I've seen you several times looking at us as if—that Mrs. Grundy expression of yours, you know."

"If I've looked at all," returned Gridley, "you've misconstrued entirely the actuating impulse. Ferenczy is a finer man than Grendon Paul, in any case, if you want frank speech."

"But in the back of your mind you have an objection to him," Constance hazarded, looking for his reactions.

"If I have any objection at all, it is one based on caution and not on scruple."

Unexpected answer, even Constance had to admit.

"That's rather baffling," she said.

"Ferenczy is a dangerous man to go about much with in public," Gridley explained. "I'm just a little surprised that he should let himself be seen in this hotbed of intrigue and espionage. Safe enough, no doubt, in his villa in Switzerland, but here it is a different matter. There are too many people who would like to see Ferenczy out of the way."

Constance read quite another meaning into his explanation—one no less, in fact, than that he guessed she was working with the Istrian against himself, and was availing himself of this rather bungling method of frightening her. Nevertheless she drew him out.

"But so long as he is here in France only on a social visit——"

"Who is to know that?" Gridley returned. "Or would any one who wants to get him forever out of the way draw the line at doing it now, whatever Ferenczy's motive for leaving the safe haven of his seclusion? Oh, don't take

it too seriously, Connie. Probably nothing will come of it. But if something should transpire while he is with you, you can comprehend that it would not be altogether agreeable for you."

Ferenczy appeared then, coming down the great stairway toward them.

"Thanks for the tip, Ken," Constance said in a quick undertone. "But I'm not afraid. Being seen with Ferenczy in Paris is a distinction too unique not to take some risks for."

Gridley was glad indeed when Constance's huge white car had departed Parisward with the two, and left him alone with Jean for a breathing space of solitude together. Jean's mood, however, was not that which he had delightedly anticipated. Neither tennis nor a walk were to her liking.

"I want to sit with you, and think, and talk a little," she said, in that exquisite voice she had at times, when she gave the impression that she was in communion with some aspect of life not known to the ordinary mortal.

Gridley knew her favorite seat, a stone bench under an age-old olive tree overlooking the carp pond. And there she said after he had lighted his pipe:

"I'm afraid for you, Ken."

"Well?"

"This business which brings you to France—can you not drop it?"

Gridley was astounded.

"You are on a strange tack."

"Can you not drop it?"

"Whatever has brought you to this state of mind, that you would ask me to give up what you said is sure to succeed?"

"You've made a powerful enemy in Constance Farrand."

"What gives you that impression?"

"I've seen her a thousand times looking at you, since—the first night she was here."

It was Jean's first reference to that memorable evening when Gridley had repelled Constance. Gridley had never

known how much Jean suspected of the facts of that episode. He tried to gloss it over.

"Oh, I'm quite sure you are mistaken. Constance and I have always quarreled and always made up again. She's not particularly antagonistic to me."

"You should make it up, then, as soon as possible."

Gridley smiled at the unwitting irony of her speech.

"Excellent advice," said he, "but not so easy to follow actively. In this case it must be passive; I shall have to wait on Constance. But if your trouble is based on fear of Constance's somewhat temperamental antagonism to me—temporary as well as temperamental—I think I can reassure you that you have nothing to fear."

"Somehow, Ken, I feel that I know these things better than you do, even though I know nothing of the facts. Where it concerns your interests I seem to have been gifted with some sort of clairvoyance. I can see trouble for you; feel it."

"I do believe it, Jeannie," Gridley said gratefully. "But this affair you are taking too seriously."

"She is a woman vitally injured," Jean reflected. "She is the most ruthless woman I have ever seen. She detests you. Your business besets you with dangers of all sorts, known and unknown. Is that not so?"

"The last sentence is true enough, at least in so far as rivalry is concerned. There exist many people who, if they knew what I am about, would stop short at nothing to balk me. But since they do not know, they are not likely to exert themselves very far."

"Drop it all, Ken."

"What? And go back to Penniman with the news that I turned coward? Jean, you can't mean that," Ken said with decision.

"If you explained matters, he would

understand and absolve you from such a charge."

"But explanations would not absolve me—to myself. No, Jean, dear, say no more about it. You are low and depressed with needless worry. Connie Farrand's being here has been trying to you."

"Not needless worry, Ken. It is as surely grounded as any fact I have ever known."

Gridley scanned her closely.

"And you know no more about it than what you have told me?" he asked.

"No. No more than that. Except, of course, the man Ferenczy and the quick intimacy that developed between them."

"Then your worry is mostly intuitive."

"Call it intuition, if you will. An overused word that is sneered at. A woman has it for the man she loves; and it is the truest form of knowledge."

"Listen, Jean: if I had known you, like this, back in the days when I was in the flying corps, and my commanding officer sent me out on a hazardous——"

"But that is so different."

"Not so very much. There is more to this business of mine than the mere reaping of dollars. And it must go on. Need we talk further of the matter?"

"But can you not make peace with Constance Farrand?"

"No. Not if she is at war with me."

She made no reply, however anxiously Gridley awaited it. Then he spoke:

"Tell me that you will think no more of it, Jean."

"I wish I might, Ken. I must keep on thinking of it. I can tell you, though, that I shall not worry any more about it—about this aspect of it. If there's no moving you, I must accept the fact."

"Sagacious woman that you are! I'm really convinced that you won't worry any more about it."

"Let's walk now, Ken. I found a place before you came here—out there on the steepest slope of the hill, a jutting rock——"

"Let's go." For Gridley was glad enough to take her mind off further futile discussion.

They returned late in the afternoon, to find Demetra in her glory, welcoming her new guests, and were forced themselves to enter into the spirit of the occasion. Jean had no further opportunity to speak to Gridley in confidence. But he, watching her from time to time, could perceive from her distraught air, in spite of her superficial cordiality, that she was still engrossed with the affair of Constance Farrand.

As Gridley mixed American cocktails in the billiard room that night, to give the new guests an added zest for dinner, a servant brought him a telegram:

Please come to me at once. I need you now as never before I needed you. Do not fail me in gravest difficulties. My apartment. Not singing. CONSTANCE.

Gridley's eyes hung upon the last words. His lips moved to the sound of them: "Not singing." For that fact, after her postponement from the preceding Friday, was almost incredible. The disaster that had overtaken her must be stringent indeed to restrain her from her appearance. He read the telegram a second time, and a second time his lips moved to words: "Connie Farrand." With a word from where he stood immobile, he caught the servant at the door:

"Aristide, I must have my car at once. See to it, will you? And inquire if I can see Miss Craven, and Miss Ballinger."

To the guests he explained:

"Most regrettable. Business. See you all later, I trust." With that, he left the room.

In ten minutes he was changed again into tweeds and, carrying cap and ulster, was on his way back downstairs. He

looked into the library, and found Jean there.

"Aristide told me——" she began.

"Yes. Telegram from Paris. Business. I must rush. You'll excuse me to your aunt, won't you, Jean?"

"Business?"

"Yes," he nodded.

"Monsieur Ribasse?" she asked.

It seemed to himself that he took an age to decide upon his answer. Then he said:

"No, Constance Farrand."

CHAPTER VIII.

Gridley found the *mise en scène* in Constance's apartment to bear out completely the aspect of disaster which her telegram had told of. Two ordinary gendarmes were there, on guard inside her door; but these, nevertheless, permitted him to pass without question. Their authority came from another man in a police uniform, but evidently of some higher standing than they. This man, in turn, led Gridley into Constance's drawing-room, where Gridley found a fourth man, gray and fussy and apoplectic, and bustling with importance. Constance sat by a window, not chafing at surveillance, but depressed below any mood Gridley had ever seen her in. She was still dressed in the suit in which she had left the Château d'Amont, an audacious and unforgettable one of green and white in broadish stripes. Disaster had clearly come upon her promptly, before she had had time to change from her motoring costume.

"Thank God you're here at last, Ken," she greeted him almost devoutly. "You'll be wanting something to eat, of course; I dare say you didn't dine."

"Eat? Now? Whatever's the matter here?" Gridley looked—and felt—as if the mere suggestion had outraged him.

Constance choked out a laugh.

"I should introduce you. I have the

honor to be visited by his excellency the chief of police of Paris, and—and his greater excellency, Monsieur—something or other—of the ministry of justice. Messieurs, I really can't remember your names," she went on, speaking to the strangers. "If you consider them at all important, will you kindly give them to my friend Mr. Gridley?"

Gridley was stunned, no longer so much by the identity of her guests, as by her high-handed and impudent manner of dealing with them. Her outrageous temperament again! Most unsafe! Insulting a high official of a Latin race is—well, it simply wasn't done impunitively by any one, unless, perchance, by Constance Farrand.

And obviously they excused it in her. The man in civilian clothes addressed Gridley now.

"Mademoiselle Farrand is of a surety vexed and harrassed, nor can we blame her," the man said, thus trying to preserve as much as he could of his self-respect. "I am Chatigny-Morel of the ministry of justice, and my collaborator in this rather distressing affair is Monsieur Beaumont of police headquarters. Of him, at least, I am sure you have heard."

"And of you as well, Monsieur Morel," Gridley lied, nodding to them both. As well, he thought, to try to rub them the right way as the wrong, even at the cost of a white lie. "Whatever the circumstances, I am sure it is a pleasure to meet you at last."

"The circumstances are regrettable," Chatigny-Morel said. "A grievous charge has been laid against Mademoiselle Farrand of which I, personally, am sure she is innocent, however impossible it is for me to be so sure officially."

"What is the charge?" Gridley demanded impatiently.

But with all French officials circumlocution is necessary.

"And we government officials of France cannot bring ourselves to deal

with so marvelous an artist and so beautiful a woman as Mademoiselle Farrand according to the regular routine of criminal procedure which would—perhaps most unjustly—put her into the ranks of the common herd and stain her spotless name with innuendo, even if she were proven innocent.”

Gridley was baffled.

“I don’t understand, monsieur,” he complained. “My lack of facility in French, perhaps—”

Constance broke in.

“Oh, Ken, dear, you are so stupid. Don’t you see? I’m under arrest on suspicion. An inhuman outrage. Why should they suspect me, merely because I chanced to motor to Paris with Ferency?”

“Ah,” breathed Gridley.

“But you know yourself, Ken, what silliness it is. And I dared them to arrest me—stood up openly in the street when they stopped the car and dared them to arrest me—that little uniformed ape there who calls himself the chief of police. And they didn’t dare, Ken; they didn’t! They took Ferency; me they brought on here to be questioned. I would answer none of their questions; I demanded an immediate audience of the minister of justice. They sent me Chatigny-Morel there, or whatever his name is. And when he came—” Her eyes gleamed with excitement.

“Oh, Connie, for Heaven’s sake, quiet down and be civil! So far as I can make out they’ve treated you with as much consideration already as they would a visiting ruler.”

“But they dared arrest me!”

“I can assure you, monsieur,” said Chatigny-Morel, “that we have done, and are doing, everything permitted under the law to mitigate Mademoiselle Farrand’s misfortune. You know yourself that any one else similarly accused of espionage and treason would be summarily incarcerated and held most securely for examination.”

“Treason and espionage?” gasped Gridley.

“Yes, Ken. Imagine the dastardliness of it! Just because I chanced to motor to town with Ferency.”

“Where is Ferency?”

“Imprisoned, monsieur,” said Chatigny-Morel, “awaiting examination.”

Gridley shook his head in something approaching despair.

“And so I sent for you. Get me out, Ken.”

“If mademoiselle will permit me,” Chatigny-Morel spoke, “I will clarify the situation for Monsieur Gridley.”

“Yes, Ken. Listen to him. You know all about it. You can clear me, of course. That’s why I sent for you.”

Gridley turned to Chatigny-Morel, who explained:

“The Count Ferency and Mademoiselle Farrand have been accused jointly of instigating a revolution in the republic of Istria, plotting for it on French soil and with French connivance.”

“Istria?” Gridley exclaimed. “Ferency? But he is Istrian. And they have known one another only— Still, go ahead.”

“It is, of course,” the under-minister went on, “a treasonable offense for one domiciled here. Otherwise France would be violating neutrality. It is France’s clear duty to discover such plots and put an end to them by taking drastic steps with the conspirators.”

“Oh, I understand all that. But the specific charges, the warrant issued against them? Surely such charges must have some groundwork of fact, something to base suspicion on. What is that base?” Gridley asked.

“In the dossier which the Istrian minister presented to the French ministry of justice— But here: an official resumé of it is attached to the warrant.” Chatigny-Morel exhibited the document, stamped and sealed and beribboned.

Gridley read it hastily. It appeared

that the Istrian minister to Paris, hearing rumors of undue activity in Istrian indebtedness bonds, conducted a quiet investigation as to the reason for it. They were low, had not paid interest, tantamount, it seemed, to repudiation. In the hands of a man hostile to the existent government, they could be used to force the new republic into bankruptcy and consequent destruction. Who could desire the fall of the government? None but Ferenczy, the exile. It was learned through the post office authorities that Ferenczy was receiving letters from brokers in Paris. It was further established that Ferenczy was being backed by American interests. Ferenczy's late trip to Paris was closely watched. Immediately he visited Americans resident in France, and was on terms of greatest intimacy with the diva, Farrand, an American, known to be ambitious politically.

"What damned rot!" cried Gridley. "Of all flimsy, trumped-up charges——"

"Did you ever hear anything to equal it in sheer effrontery, Ken?"

Chatigny-Morel threw his hands apart.

"But what can one do, monsieur? The dossier was given us by the accredited Istrian minister in Paris, with the demand for the protection of Istrian honor here, and for the arrest and examination of the suspects. The government of France can do no less than obey. The comity of nations renders it impossible for France to underestimate—officially, at least—the word of a diplomat accredited to her. We must arrest, imprison, examine, try in the French courts, those named in the warrant demanded by the Istrian minister. Of Ferenczy we could make no exception; of mademoiselle we can make none—though we do."

"How can you make exception of her?" Gridley wanted to know.

"In the first place, because of her standing, her position; and in the second

place, because she so convincingly denied having any knowledge of the affair. Save that her unsupported word——"

"The point is this, Ken: I simply told them I knew nothing of their silly old bonds. And that you were the one actually engaged in that affair."

"Connie! How did you know that?" he demanded.

"Why, Grendon Paul told me," she said with surprise that he did not recollect.

Chatigny-Morel interrupted:

"Mademoiselle Farrand said that you would clear up the affair of the indebtedness bonds. That done to my satisfaction as a member of the ministry of justice, I am justified in permitting her to go free. We have to accept the fact that there is some tampering with the bonds. If you can account for it to my satisfaction, it would be unnecessary to place her under formal arrest. If you cannot account for it, then I am bound by my duty to my government to arrest her formally, and hold her in prison until her case comes to the superior court for trial."

"Extraordinary," exclaimed Gridley. "Incredible."

"That's why I sent for you, Ken. A brilliant idea of mine, really," Constance said. "I knew you could help me." And in her mind there was no more of doubt than there would have been in a child's, that her complete freedom was a simple matter of moments only.

Again, in silence while the three others watched him with eager expectation, Gridley read through the bestamped and besealed warrant and its supporting evidence.

"You mean," said he in perplexity, "that if I confess that it is I who am chiefly interested in the Istrian bonds, you will release Miss Farrand and exculpate her completely?"

"Yes; if you establish a reasonable and credible motive for your interest in them."

"Amusing situation, isn't it?" Gridley said.

"But, Ken, it is such a simple affair for you; and for me—think what!"

"True enough, Connie. I want to think a moment first. I—if it were my secret, my own affair—but it happens that it is chiefly the affair of another. You understand, messieurs. Still, Mademoiselle Farrand— It's an unjust, silly accusation against her, yet one that would discredit her in Paris—and everywhere. It is not simple, Connie, for it is not my secret."

"Ken," she said in sudden fear.

"And yet," Gridley went on slowly, almost as if he were talking to himself, "if I am dealing with gentlemen, as it appears that I am. I do see a way clear to preserve my self-respect and— Monsieur Morel," he said suddenly, increasing now the tempo of his speech, "could I not make to you, here, a confidential statement concerning my interest in those bonds: make it only for the purpose of clearing Mademoiselle Farrand, and have your word of honor that it would be used for no other purpose?"

"Silly question, Ken!" Constance cried. "Naturally one of the ministry of justice is to be trusted with secrets."

Chatigny-Morel nodded his acceptance of Gridley's proposal.

"Well, then," Gridley said, "it is I who am buying up options on the Istrian bonds, on behalf of Walter H. Penniman of New York. Does that suffice you?" he asked.

"Your mere statement, unsupported? And it is almost incredible that a financier, so astute as Mr. Penniman is supposed to be, should invest in bonds of so little value as those you are buying for him," Chatigny-Morel declared.

"But what proof can I offer? I haven't a scrap of paper with me—none short of the safe deposit vault at Ribasse Frères."

Chatigny-Morel considered this.

"If you could establish some motive," he suggested, "give me some credible motive for that which now seems incredible. Why should you—or Penniman—be interested in those bonds?"

Again Gridley hesitated.

"Would you be good enough, if you must know, to ask the two gendarmes at the door to step outside the apartment? I am sure that I can trust monsieur the chief of police."

The police captain gave the necessary orders, and admitted his own trustworthiness.

Then Gridley, lowering his voice, said:

"Penniman plans to overthrow the government and put in his son-in-law as dictator. And now I suspect I shall be arrested as the conspirator for a revolution."

"Extraordinary!" burst from Chatigny-Morel's lips.

"Ken! Impossible."

Gridley shrugged his shoulders.

"Believe it or not; have no more than that to say."

Chatigny-Morel broke the tense silence that followed.

"As to your arrest, Monsieur Gridley, there has been laid no complaint against you."

"Identical cases," Gridley commented, cramming his hands into his pockets with a gesture of completest resignation. "However, since I'm not so famous as Ferenczy, or as Mademoiselle Farrand—" Then, with a light laugh, he switched to English. "There's something in being a dull clod after all, Connie."

That seemed, to judge from the expression of her eyes, to hurt her a little, but she made no direct reply to it. She spoke instead to Chatigny-Morel.

"Is that convincing to you at last, monsieur?"

The under-minister looked at the police captain, and found in his expression an affirmative answer.

"Most satisfactory, I should say," Chatigny-Morel pronounced it. "I think we need bother you no more, mademoiselle. Ten thousand apologies——"

"No matter about that now," Constance said, as if she were in haste to have them gone. "What about Ferenczy?"

"He, of course, will be released without more formalities. I shall report the case as entirely quashed."

"Then, if that is all——" she hinted.

"Yes, we are going immediately." And in Gallic fashion the two took their leave.

As soon as they were gone Gridley crushed out a half-smoked cigarette against an ash tray. Then he stood for a moment in that unusual and wonder-provoking attitude, looking across the table at Constance who still sat in her chair by the window. She watched him, fenced with his eyes, though in them there was nothing but a compassion for her which she both resented and failed to understand. Compassion for her—Constance Farrand! She darted defiance at him. He shook his head a little from side to side.

"Oh, Connie," said he, "what is it not costing you, this lust for power and adulation?"

Even as he spoke her mood relented, for there was a tenderness in his voice which beat down her resentment almost completely.

"Ken, don't look at me like that, and talk to me so: it's worse than if you condemned me outright."

"Neither the one nor the other is of any avail. Good-by, Connie," he told her simply.

Yet after he had gone with no more than a colorless echo of his own farewell she found herself flung into an abyss of depression, and in vain called after him:

"Ken, Ken, you are too cruel to me!"

CHAPTER IX.

For an indefinite lapse of time after Gridley had gone Constance sat as she was: not so much with the aspect of thinking, or of deciding anything, or of regretting anything, but rather as being possessed of a lowness of spirits that amounted to inanition, of a depression beyond any volitional recovery. After a time, however, she little by little regained her self-mastery, and by an effort of acting as if she had to deceive herself, she called a servant and commanded harshly:

"Telephone to the Count Vladimir Ferenczy at the Hôtel des Tuileries, and tell him that I am now ready to see him. Bid him come to me at once. And bring me champagne immediately, a half bottle of the Lanson '03."

But not her acting, nor her effort of will, nor the champagne, succeeded in reviving her spirits by the time Ferenczy arrived in answer to her summons. He, standing broad and straight in the doorway after bowing to her as he entered, smiled at her as with the purpose of reassuring her, and said, his low deep voice somewhat softened:

"It doesn't matter, mademoiselle, if you have failed. I am sure no one could have done more than you."

"Amazing introduction of yourself," she said harshly, a little baffled by it. "Why do you think I have failed? I have not failed."

Ferenczy, who had read her intelligently, was perplexed.

"But you have the appearance of—what to say? Ah, perhaps you regret success."

"Regret it? I never regret anything that I do."

Still he was puzzled. Unabashed, he continued:

"One might say that you are abysmally cast down."

She concealed the sureness of his aim by laughing it off lightly.

"That is because of the strain, per-

haps. It was not easy. I am quite all right. Whatever gives you the notion that I am not right?" she criticized him rather petulantly. "Sit down somewhere, and smoke."

She watched him seat himself, and rebelled that he was not yet undeceived about her depression. She would retrieve herself now at any cost.

"I am wrong when I said it was difficult. It was ridiculously easy. What fools men are!"

"I am all curiosity; far more than that, in fact."

"Curious as to the means, or to the facts?"

"Whichever you prefer to tell me."

And what more natural than that Constance should prefer to tell of her own cleverness?

"A woman who can act, a woman who has brains, can do what she will with any man," she boasted.

"Granted. In your case, at any rate," said Ferenczy; and, seeing that she preferred to tell of her own part, prompted her in that respect. For Ferenczy had had no notion of what she meant to do when she dropped him at the Etoile on their way in from Châteaudun, and asked him to wait at the Tuileries until she called him. But he could wait then, for she had told him that when she sent for him, she would have the information he sought. And now she proceeded:

"I stage-managed it beautifully, really. The finest bit of acting, I think, that I have ever done. Fortunately I had friends enough, and capable enough, to see me through it. Raoul Pellerin, as the under-minister of justice, was impeccable. He has missed his calling, and I must tell him so. And he drew up the document, too, on paper he got from some clerk or other in the ministry, and——"

"Mademoiselle, I don't understand it at all."

"Oh, how stupid you are. I played I

was arrested, you see, and sent for Ken to help me out, and of course he did. Rather clever, in fact. The whole idea was mine. You see—but here: the warrant on which I was arrested is still here. Read it. That will tell you better than I can do." She found the warrant where Pellerin, alias Chatigny-Morel, had left it after it had served its purpose.

Ferenczy read it once, with no comprehension of its meaning; and a second time with comprehension all too clear.

"I see you understand it," Constance smiled at him.

His heavy brows almost met.

"Yes, mademoiselle, I understand it perfectly."

"He had to tell the under-minister, who held me in durance, in order that I might escape arrest and trial on the charge."

"And he did? He would tell, of course. He came here from Châteaudun, and——"

"Came here so quickly, that we barely had time to rehearse our parts before he burst in upon us. The ink on the warrant was scarcely dry."

Ferenczy said nothing. He was looking at Constance without, one felt, actually seeing her. He toyed in abstracted manner with the document. She wondered that he did not speak.

"Was it not clever?" she asked presently.

"Clever? Very. I might add an adverb, except that it is a word one hesitates to apply to mademoiselle."

"What is that?"

"Diabolically clever, if you will pardon me."

"Your enthusiasm does not seem quite—well, unrestrained."

"I am afraid, mademoiselle, that I could never be a successful diplomat. To take unfair advantage of a man—I have never been able to inure myself to it. But if there is a side to be regretted, I must confess—with all pos-

sible admiration I must confess—that it was clever.”

“You are taking this with an extraordinary coolness.”

“Am I? Perhaps. I regret it infinitely.”

“I don’t understand your attitude at all. You should at least be grateful.”

“I am, inexpressibly so, for your interest and your unselfish efforts in my behalf. It all puts me in a most difficult position.”

“What do you mean?” she demanded.

“I—find it impossible to use, to my advantage, information gained in just that way. Other men, perhaps more fortunately constituted, might be able to. But I—” He shook his head in regretful resolution.

“I understand you less and less.”

“He—a friend of yours! In fact, I may as well confess that Grendon Paul told me he loved you. There was nothing else for him to do. He had no choice in the matter but to betray himself. He had no chance. And in spite of my campaigning—in war and in politics—I am not yet inured to the taking of an unfair advantage.”

“Unfair advantage? That comes precious near to being an insult.”

“Not an insult, mademoiselle. Only, let us say, one manifestation of my somewhat warped character. I am not without the fullest appreciation of your efforts and of your benevolence, but I can’t make use of information gained in that way.”

“But Grendon Paul will ruin you.”

“Better that I return to Switzerland, and to exile.”

“Are you, too, trying to put me to shame?”

“I am trying to do nothing, mademoiselle, save to extricate myself in the only possible way from a position no longer tenable. If only you had told me what you contemplated doing! Tell me this much frankly—ask yourself the question and answer it honestly—did you

not refrain from telling me what method you had in view because you knew I would disapprove of it?”

She evaded the question with a shrug.

Impossible for her to believe. Yet she did Ferenczy the honor of not resenting blindly, but of trying to understand.

“But you did accept my aid, you know,” she remonstrated after a period of thought.

Ferenczy nodded recognition of the fact, though with infinite apology and regret. He was a man self-abased, but without rebellion against his enforced line of conduct.

“Yes, mademoiselle, I did accept your aid. What is there to say, except that I was overtempted by my love of country, by my hatred of exile. Mademoiselle, can you guess what that amounts to for me, for Johann Ferenczy?”

“Yes, I can guess, I think. Go on. I am listening as I never listened to man before. Go on.”

“And most of all was I tempted by your benevolence to me. But, mademoiselle, that you—you, that divine American whose *Thais* might at this moment be lifting a thousand souls to its heights of spirituality—that you should have stooped to means like this— But again a thousand pardons, mademoiselle. It is a subject that bears no further discussion; for the more we discuss it, the more difficult it becomes. I must bid you *au revoir*.”

He waited for her reply. She seemed not to see him, perhaps not even to have heard him, for her rejoinder when at last it came was not in keeping with his last speech.

“I wonder,” she said, “if ever woman has been so humiliated as I?” It was not speech, those few words of hers; rather was it a haunting cry for mercy, from depths unknown to her.

She moved Ferenczy, however without purpose, as she had never moved an audience before.

"Mademoiselle, do not, I beg of you, make it so hard for me to pursue the path——"

She interrupted him wearily.

"Monsieur le comte, I mean to make nothing hard for you. Pursue the path you have chosen; it is the right path. And go now, please."

"Go now, and leave you in this state?"

"Yes."

As he looked at her, and sought in vain to find words of solace, it seemed as if a sudden illumination came upon him.

"It is Grendon Paul behind all this."

"Grendon Paul?" she wondered faintly.

"Yes; and what he stands for. He overtempted me. He brought you to this. The world would be the better for his taking off. Mademoiselle, since you wish me to go, again I bid you—au revoir."

And in the accent of those last two words, this strong and passionate and desperate man put a sinister volume of meaning.

CHAPTER X.

At some—to Constance—very indefinite interval after Ferenczy's departure her maid came in to announce:

"An American young lady, Miss Jean Ballinger, to see you."

Constance scarcely comprehended.

"Here? To see me? Now? Jean Ballinger?" she said incredulously as she willed herself back from her self-revilement.

The maid was contrite before that which she plainly saw in her mistress' bearing.

"I can send her away. I regret, mademoiselle, announcing to you at this time——"

"I will see her, of course," Constance interrupted. "Have her come to me here." She was beyond perplexity and wonderment; quite impassively she awaited Jean.

Jean entered, a somewhat curious vision in slippers and stockings that had evidently been worn with her dinner gown, in a heavy woolen sport skirt and sweater, in a fur motor coat and yarn cap.

"Delightfully informal sort of visit, Miss Ballinger," Constance greeted her, once more master of herself. "Are you indeed alone, or is Miss Craven here, too?"

It seemed to Constance as if Jean were reading the plain story of all that had just transpired in that room, even though her lazy-lidded eyes scarcely moved.

"I came alone. Rather audacious, don't you think?" She gave her coat to the maid who had shown her in.

Constance, awaiting the statement of her mission, offered her a cigarette, which she took absently.

"He has been here, and gone, I see," Jean said.

"Who?"

"Ken."

Constance would have evaded, but of what avail to try to evade a woman like this one?

"Yes. He's been here and gone," she admitted, not quite intimidating Jean with her acted defiance.

"And you—succeeded?"

"I succeeded in what?"

"In making him tell what Ferenczy, and Grendon Paul, wished to know? I know you succeeded; you look so guilty."

"I, guilty?"

Yet there was no rancor in Jean's voice or words; one might have said that she was merely stating an impersonal fact.

"I think," she said, "that I know how you feel about it—now. Of course I don't know much about it; but I have a feeling."

"You rather amaze me. After all, may I ask why you came to me at all; or why are you here? You aren't so

young as not to understand what you are doing."

"Why ask me? I am sure you know. I came to ask you not to take advantage of—your strength."

"Strength? My strength, you say?"

"No, I can't say that, after all; that is for you to say. More concretely, I have come to ask you not to tell Grendon Paul what you now know about Ken's business. It's not too late, is it?"

"I haven't yet told him, if that is what you mean."

"Have you told Ferency?"

This reminded Constance that Ferency had not even so much as inquired.

"No, nor Ferency."

"I knew I should be in time," Jean said. Contrary to what Constance expected, there was apparent neither in her speech nor her face any gladness or relief, but rather a sort of serene assurance in herself that mystified her hostess, intrigued her, and gave her a sharp pang of covetousness for the soul that of its own strength could be so unperturbed.

Constance wanted to change the subject.

"Queer your aunt should let you come to me like this. Does she know?"

"No; but it would have made no difference. I drove myself. That is why—perhaps it is as well that I did not reach you while Ken was here."

"Perhaps that is true."

"Especially since you have decided, after all, not to tell what you learned from him."

"You take rather a lot for granted."

"Oh, I think not, Miss Farrand; not, at least, if you can see his point of view rather than your own."

"Why do you look at me like that? You hate me, of course."

"I don't hate you. I think perhaps I feel sorry for you. No, not quite that. I think I feel sorry that you are not what you might be."

"But I am Constance Farrand. How many are there like me in the world?"

"Rather futile to discuss that, isn't it? It's so evident, after all, that you are—Constance Farrand." Jean laughed a little. "But Ken's business, you know. That is the real thing before us now, isn't it? I wonder if you understand all the circumstances. Do you know, for example, that, if Grendon Paul learns definitely what Ken's business is, he will ruin it immediately?"

"That's Ken's affair; not mine."

"Is it any longer Ken's affair? Isn't it—haven't you made it—your affair entirely?"

"You strike me as being rather impertinent about it."

"Yet you evade a direct answer to my question. And the uneasiness about it all, the sense of guilt, remains in your mind just the same. Therefore it is of no avail to argue with you. You know I am right."

Constance chafed against this impregnable serenity of assurance; it imposed upon her an ineluctable sense of her own paltriness of spirit. The sole relief she could have made for herself was a storm of words, of sarcasm, and subtle abuse. And instinct told her that the release of such a torrent would only weaken and cheapen herself, and leave Jean Ballinger unperturbed and pitying. How incredibly small and helpless she felt before this girl who, in years, was as a child to her, and in achievement nothing.

"I've really only one more thing to say, Miss Farrand. And that, perhaps," she added with a faint touch of sarcasm, "will have a stronger appeal to you as being somehow a more tangible, a more surely comprehensible thing than an abstract question of right and wrong."

"It is unbelievable to me that I should permit you to insult me like this, and say nothing in return."

"I think I have a knack of making people see clearly, Miss Farrand. What I was about to say is this: You know Grendon Paul's power, and his ruthless-

ness. You know, I think, what happens to men who get in his way and will not of their own accord step aside."

"You mean—murder?"

"Yes, that is what I mean."

"Oh," exclaimed Constance with easy scorn; "but, in Ken's case, that is too far-fetched."

"Is it? You know Grendon Paul, and you know Ken's business. I don't, I admit."

Constance could not so lightly dismiss the thought. "I wonder——"

"Think it over well. Does that hint, at least, not set you to thinking seriously?"

"But that hint, as you call it, must be nonsense."

"Must it be? Is it? You know."

"It is nonsense. I think I hate you. You are frightening me. Something about you frightens me," Constance said.

"That which frightens you is not something about me, but something about yourself."

"I don't understand you. My affairs are my affairs, yet you choose to make them yours. I find myself baffled. My affairs are my affairs, and I permit you to make them yours."

A maid entered.

"Monsieur Paul is on the telephone," she announced, "and will speak with Mademoiselle Farrand."

That announcement broke the spell for Constance, and brought her to herself again. Fancy being bullied in this fashion by a chit of a girl, and to be able to say nothing in self-defense. Intolerable!

"Switch the call in here," she commanded the maid with a swift petulance. "I will talk with him here." And as she sat herself at the telephone she so far forgot herself as to glare defiance at Jean.

The bell rang. A sense of uneasiness grew on her under Jean's lazy-lidded watchfulness as she listened for Paul's

voice. Jean left her chair suddenly and came over to her.

"Before you talk with him," Jean said, "I must ask you one thing. Put your hand over the transmitter while I talk. Why did you do this thing to Ken? Did you gain anything from it?"

"It is not your affair. I will not be questioned by you."

"You will answer my questions—in your own mind if not to me. You did this in a burst of jealousy against him—ruined him to salve your wounded pride. There is really no other reason. You would ruin him to give balm to yourself for your own folly. Now talk with Paul; but I shall stay here, close by you, remember."

Constance was glad enough to answer Paul, who had been shouting at her for seconds through the telephone.

"Yes, yes, Grendon. . . . That matter of Ferency. . . . Yes, that matter of Ken Gridley. . . . I thought you'd want to know the most important facts to-night. . . . Yes, he told me, of course. Why shouldn't he have told me? Wouldn't you tell me anything I asked you to? And surely he's not stronger than you." She laughed exquisitely.

Then she felt the pressure of Jean's hand on her shoulder, shivered suddenly under it, and went on hastily to Paul:

"Yes, Ken told me all about it. In short, the affair of his——"

Again Constance felt that pressure on her shoulder. Jean spoke:

"Remember, you are afraid; and you are afraid not of me, nor of Ken, but of yourself. Yourself you cannot escape. Remember."

Paul, meantime, was demanding that she continue, fretting over the telephone that she had suddenly stopped talking, and begging her to go on. She tried to shake Jean's hand from her shoulder, but could not. At last she found her voice to speak:

"Yes, of course I know all about it,

Grendon, but the facts are—the fact is——” Then abruptly she changed her halting and hesitant voice and spoke with quick staccato:

“And the fact is I shall tell you nothing about it. . . . No, no. . . . Nor Ferenczy either. . . . Useless for you to keep on. I have made up my mind. . . . What? . . . Your enemy? I? How dare you threaten me? I shall not tell you. . . . No, no, no!” She listened for a moment more, and then put the instrument back upon its hooks. She sat back in her chair as if the strength had gone out of her, and stared at Jean: “You are right; the man’s a demon.”

“Does it matter?”

“He threatened me. He threatens me. Who are you? What have you made me do, and how, and why?”

“Do you regret it?”

“Regret it? No. Suddenly I’m glad—infinately glad. I can’t express it. And the man threatens me, too. Wait, though. Some one else knows. I must warn him.”

She rang for her maid, who appeared at once.

“Find for me Monsieur Raoul Pellerin,” she commanded. “Telephone for him to his apartment, to the Sport Club, the night restaurants; telephone until you find him.”

The maid departed upon her mission, and was speedily back with success. A man so well known in the night life of Paris was not hard to find. Constance clutched the telephone vehemently, and spoke:

“That affair here of this evening, Raoul, you are to say no word of it. . . . No, no. . . . Not a word to any one. It is my command. Least of all to Grendon Paul. You understand? . . . It is my command.”

She sat back in her chair and looked at Jean in radiant relief.

“There,” she said. “It is an affair ended. It exists no more. You have

worked a miracle; but you have worked it.”

Nevertheless it was far from being an affair ended. Pellerin, impoverished man about town, had all along seen in the matter vast possibilities for himself. Constance’s telephone message to him precipitated his activity in his own behalf. Immediately he put himself into communication with Grendon Paul and, as a result of subtle suggestion, was honored with an appointment forthwith at the Englishman’s suite at the hotel. There, after some introductory skirmishing he plunged straight into the matter.

“Between us, Mademoiselle Farrand and I staged a sort of modern inquisition,” he told Paul, “as a result of which I gained possession of that secret business in connection with the Istrian foreign loan, which brings the American to Paris.”

“Well, and what of it?” snapped Paul.

“I have that information to sell—at a price.”

“It is not worth a price to me.”

“Because you expect to get it from Mademoiselle Farrand. But she, being in love with the American, has at the last resolved not to betray him. I come now from being telephoned to by her, threatening me——”

Paul had heard enough.

“I might have suspected it,” he said.

“Are you willing to talk price?”

“How should I know that your information is correct?”

“Would I lie to you when the truth is so easily established?”

“You might be more convincing if you told me by what means you gained the information you seek so eagerly to sell me.”

“That I shall do amiably,” Pellerin promised with satisfaction; and proceeded to give a full account of the working out of Constance’s plan.

Grendon Paul approved of it, with

that respect which he had only for cleverness and for power.

"A clever woman, Pellerin," he praised her.

"The whole affair was clever," said Pellerin, including himself. "But now—the matter of price."

"Well?"

"Fifty thousand francs," said Pellerin. "Your check will do, since it would be difficult to obtain the cash to-night: your check, with a description in your handwriting covering the reason for the issuance of the check."

Grendon Paul thought it over.

"You are a shrewd fellow, Pellerin," he commented, but proceeded without further remark to comply with Pellerin's request. He handed him the check on a French bank, and the covering account as requested. Pellerin approved both.

"And now," Paul prompted him.

"Gridley is buying up the Istrian bonds," Pellerin said, "for Penniman's control, so that Penniman may buy for his son-in-law the dictatorship of Istria."

"What?" The word was like a bullet.

Pellerin, a little nonplussed by Paul's unexpected reception of his statement, repeated verbatim what he had said.

Paul's face was transformed with rage, but he strove to keep calm.

"If you will lie to me, Pellerin, lie credibly at least."

"But it is no lie. It is the truth absolute."

"No concoction of fiction could be more nonsensical; it is the sheerest bunk."

"I am telling you the truth, monsieur."

"You lie. You are doing me for the money." Paul jumped to his feet.

Pellerin followed suit.

"I am as brave as you, monsieur, and as powerful. You are trying to get your money back. I have told you the truth."

Paul's powerful hands shot out to the other's throat.

"You lie to me. It is not my money I want, but the truth. And the truth I will have. Give me the truth of it." He choked Pellerin back against the wall of the room, and shook him there repeatedly.

But Pellerin, caught by surprise though he had been, was a match for him. A swift upward kick, a trick practiced and approved of all Frenchmen of his type, sent Paul reeling away in a nausea of agony.

"I have told you the truth, and I have no more to say."

"You have lied to me," groaned the Englishman, "but no matter. I shall have the truth from her."

"That, monsieur, is your affair. I bid you au revoir."

As Pellerin went out Paul's valet, who had heard the fracas from his quarters, came running in.

"Monsieur is hurt?" he inquired.

"I am all right, Jules. Inquire if Miss Farrand is in her apartment. Do not tell her who inquires. If she is, fetch me my hat and coat and have a cab waiting for me."

CHAPTER XI.

When he left Constance's apartment Gridley had gone to find his banker, and counted himself fortunate indeed to find Monsieur Ribasse at that hour of the night—for it was then after ten o'clock—spending his evening at home. Ribasse welcomed him cordially.

"I do apologize for negotiating affairs at this ungodly hour of the night," Gridley said, "but a sudden change has entered into the business."

"No word of apology, mon ami. I am delighted to see you again, and even though it be business which brings you here, I am grateful that it does. You will come with me into my study?"

Monsieur Ribasse closed the door be-

hind them, with a reassuring sign to Gridley that conversation here was confidential indeed. He ordered cigars and cigarettes and whisky, but found Gridley too impatient beneath his restraint to be expected to wait for those evidences of hospitality.

"You may talk freely," he said.

"As I suggested, Monsieur Ribasse," Gridley said, "a sudden change has taken place which renders it necessary for me to close up everything at once. I contemplate leaving for Istria on the early morning train, and yet—and yet— Well, I must leave, I think. Tell me, have you heard further from the groups at Roubaix and Lille and Tourcoing? Are they still holding out for a better price?"

"I have heard nothing new."

Gridley was slowly walking the floor.

"Let me see: one hundred million francs total issue. I must control fifty-one million. I must have those groups in the north of France or I have nothing to go to Istria with. A matter of two million francs, is it not, before I have enough—one hundred thousand dollars par value at the present rate of exchange?"

"That will turn the trick for you."

"Offer them their price, then. It is robbery to give them par value for which they paid but half, and with the bonds selling now at a tenth of par. But no matter. I have come out very well indeed in the matter of prices so far, and I must have their bonds by the day after to-morrow."

"You are too liberal with them. Offer them less."

"If I had time to go and see them. But now I daren't."

"Something has happened which disturbs you? Or perhaps you do not care to tell."

"Yes. Grendon Paul. I was caught by him in something of a trap, and in order to clear myself temporarily I told a detestable lie." Yet Gridley laughed

a little even as he spat out the word.

"I said that Penniman wanted to use the bonds to buy his son-in-law a job as dictator in Istria."

"Fiction astonishing!" exclaimed Ribasse, perplexity stifling amusement.

Gridley hurried on:

"It was necessary to say something in order that I might gain the respite of some breathing space, at least. How long it will take Grendon Paul to learn that that is a lie I do not know, and I can take no chances."

"One doesn't take chances with Grendon Paul."

"Will you do this for me, Monsieur Ribasse?"

"Anything, mon ami."

"Give as much as you can of your personal attention to-morrow to bargaining with the three groups in the north of France. Get their holdings at any cost, and when you have them wire me to that effect in care of the American minister to Istria. I shall have to leave on the early morning train and shall have no time to attend to it myself. I must be there to close with the government as soon as I have the majority of the bond issue; if I am not there, Grendon Paul will do me one way or another."

"I understand perfectly, Monsieur Gridley. Your matter shall have my undivided attention until I have gained control of the bonds at the best price possible."

"I am grateful to you beyond expression. What I have done already I could not have done without your advice; and if I did not have you to rely on now, I should be beaten indeed. And now, if you will excuse me, I have one or two personal matters to attend to, and the train departs at six in the morning," he concluded.

"But wait, mon ami. Is it not dangerous, since Paul knows——"

Gridley laughed tenderly, so that Monsieur Ribasse's keen sympathy in-

terpreted to him the nature of Gridley's business without knowing its exact detail.

"This," said Gridley as he laughed, "is an affair which warrants much risk; and after all——"

Monsieur Ribasse smiled in turn.

"And again, I understand you. There is usually but one sort of an affair in a man's life which warrants all risks, and therefore I shall not try further to detain you. *Mes bénédictions*, cher monsieur, in this affair as in the other, and you shall hear from me in Istria."

Gridley's affair was with Constance, and he went back to her immediately. To find Jean with Constance was completely unexpected, and yet it provoked no more speech between them than:

"Jean, dear."

"Ken."

It seemed as if by those three words each had told the other all that was worth knowing. Then Gridley spoke to Constance exactly as he had intended to speak:

"I wonder, Connie, if I am always coming back to you, or you to me. I am here, at any rate."

Jean unobtrusively left the room, though probably neither Constance nor Gridley were aware of her going.

Constance replied:

"Ken, I am glad you have come back to me. I have much to tell you."

Gridley then checked the hasty, even the rather nasty, speech that was on his lips.

"Connie, what's happened? You—you've changed. You aren't yourself."

"Changed, you think?" she asked with a smile such as he had never before seen on her lips.

"Changed indescribably. What is it? It's Jean."

"It's many things, Ken. Perhaps Jean most of all. Why did you come to me?"

"I came to you to lecture you, perhaps even to berate you, and to make a

confession. I shall let it go with making the confession."

"You have—you have something to confess to me?"

"Yes. I am leaving for Istria early in the morning. This was my last chance to see you. I—oh, I must say it, Connie, but without rancor now—I matched my methods with yours in the late episode you staged here this evening. I told you a detestable lie to get out of the—yes, let me call it trap, also without rancor."

"Trap? What? You understood? I didn't deceive you?"

"No. I don't know why. It was clever; very clever. At another time I might have been deluded. It was, perhaps, a bit too specious; the facts were, perhaps, too much paralleled with my own affairs. But I wasn't deceived. And so I lied to you."

"You knew all the time that it was a trap?"

"Yes, Connie; at any rate, at the last I knew."

"How you must detest me."

"But I came back to you, you see. No, 'detest' is not the word; as far as possible, I think, from the true statement. 'Pity' perhaps is better; I may as well be frank."

"I remember now how you looked at me when you went. You were sorry for me?"

"I think so; as I've since been sorry for myself. I matched my methods with yours, as I say. There is something somewhere, isn't there, about a mote and a beam and a neighbor's eye? That's as much as I know about it. Aunt Demetra could tell us, but she, dear soul, isn't here; and distance telephone charges in France are something tremendous."

"Ken, you're laughing now."

"Perhaps I am, Connie. I'm suddenly rather happy." Nevertheless his face became grave again. "I've come back to confess, you know. Do you want

the truth of my business here? You shall have it if you want it."

"Ken!"

"I mean it."

"Do you mean you'd tell me, really?"

"Of course; that's what I'm here for."

"But would you tell me your business if I hadn't—changed?"

"All the more surely, I think."

"Why? To shame me?"

He hesitated over his answer.

"Connie, I don't know. I dare say I would have flattered myself that it was a point of honor; but perhaps it would really have been to shame you. Does it matter?"

"No, not now. Tell me, Ken, has it cost you anything—that trick I played on you?"

He thought a moment. Before this change in her he probably would have told her of the precipitated journey to Istria, with its manifold chances for failure, perhaps even of the extra tens of thousands he must pay for the immediate possession of the bonds owned in the north of France. But now:

"The greatest cost, I can truthfully say, was so complete a loss—yes, complete, Connie—of my respect for you."

"And that, Ken, was of far more value to me than to you."

"And so, all told, we're rather well out of it."

Like an echo to his words came the announcement:

"Monsieur Grendon Paul."

Paul followed upon the maid's heels as by the prerogative of intimates, or perhaps by the urgency of his mission. And so great was that, that he evinced no surprise at finding Gridley there. On the contrary, his first speech was to Gridley:

"You here? Perhaps it's just as well."

Constance spoke then:

"You seem to forget that I hadn't yet said I would see you."

Paul addressed her: "It would have made no difference. At least, it would have been far wiser to see me than to refuse. I have seen Pellerin."

This statement opened for Constance possibilities not anticipated.

"Raoul Pellerin? He came to see you?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"To sell me the great secret: Gridley's secret." Paul laughed harshly.

"And like a fool I bought it; paid good money for it before I saw the goods."

"Raoul Pellerin sold you the secret?"

To Constance it was incredible. Pellerin, of all men! What manner of friends were these she had cherished in Paris?

"And after he had got my money, he told me a cock-and-bull story that no one but a fool, or an ass, could believe."

"What did he tell you?" Constance asked.

"That Penniman wants to make his son-in-law dictator of Istria. Sheerest nonsense! What is the truth? Gridley, what did you tell her? What is the truth of this?"

"But that is what he told me," Constance said.

Gridley added his word:

"Yes, that is what I told her."

"That is what you told her?"

"Yes."

Not even Grendon Paul could fail to believe.

"Well, you are clever. I thought she was clever when I heard Pellerin's story. But I shall have to give you credit for going her one better. It's a relief, in any case, to know that I've not been bilked by Pellerin. I might have known that I wasn't. I choked him, the coward that he is, but still he clung to it. But I couldn't believe. And so I came to you, Constance. And now I want the truth. Only now it must come from Gridley himself. Come; out with it!"

"Well," exclaimed Gridley, "I must say that is cool."

"Amazing audacity," Constance declared it to be.

"Not so amazing," Paul returned, "as you may think. Do you realize what you've done, Constance? What you've laid yourself open to?"

"What?"

"Conspiracy; the impersonation of a French officer, and a high official at that. By Jove! Twelve years for the lot of you at the lightest sentence. Lèse majesty; code Napoleon; outraging the ministry of justice. Oh, by Jove; silly lot you are. And Pellerin, the fool, laughed about it as being clever. No matter now; out with it, Gridley!"

Gridley, biting his lip, looked at Constance.

She, perplexed, asked:

"What does he mean?"

"That you've let yourself in rather badly, Connie," Gridley answered.

"But he's bluffing, isn't he? I've done no crime."

"Bluffing? Upon my word!" cried Grendon Paul.

Gridley shook his head.

"No; not bluffing. It's really rather a serious offense, very serious."

"But I didn't know. Pellerin—why didn't he know my danger? Why didn't he warn me?" Constance asked, looking in her despair at Gridley.

Paul laughed again at that.

"Pellerin, silly ass! What does he know but polo patter from the safety of the side lines and women's clothes? He or any of your friends, for that matter? What would you expect of Pellerin?"

Gridley spoke now.

"Stop that abuse. If you've got to talk, talk civilly and let us know what you want."

"Civility and the woman business is all right in its place, but this is no place for either. You know what I want: the truth from you about your business,

or Miss Farrand under arrest as soon as I can call up the gendarmes from the porter's lodge. They are there, waiting for my call. That is no bluff, either; go and see for yourself. You'll come back here. Go and see."

"And this," said Connie with fine scorn, "is the sort of man I bargained with; that I've been seen in public with; been proud of being with——"

"Oh, stop," Paul broke in. "I've no more time for words. Gridley tells, or you go to a magistrate. And there's no grace of time for hemming and hawing. It's now or never that he tells."

Constance got out of her chair quite calmly, and stood before Paul.

"But he'll not tell you a word. It's silly of you to think I'd permit it."

"What have you to say about it? It's Gridley to talk now, or you to come with me."

"I'm ready to come with you. Take me."

"Take you?" Paul said, really surprised. "You don't know what you're saying. You, Constance Farrand, under arrest on an outrageous criminal charge, imprisonment for a long term certain? Come, Gridley, you can't hesitate."

"Ken, you'll not tell him a word. I know what it means if you do. You'll not tell him." That again was Constance, not in weakness, but with her characteristic authority of voice and manner.

Gridley shook his head in bewilderment.

"Connie, I don't know what to do. I do know what it means to me to tell him. You've let us all in so badly. Though, of course, I can't see you taken off——"

Constance interrupted him:

"You'll not tell him a word." Then she turned to Paul: "I am ready. Why do you not take me away?"

Paul fixed Gridley's eyes:

"Is that your last word on it?"

Still Gridley hesitated.

Constance begged now:

"It is his last word. I want it to be your last word, Ken."

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, then, the one thing I do not do is bluff. If you are ready, Miss Farrand——"

But at that moment Jean Ballinger appeared in the doorway: a dramatic entry, though completely quiet. For there was that about her which made all three occupants of the room follow her serene walk to Gridley's side, where she stood with her hand on his shoulder. None of them spoke until she had spoken.

"I have been listening to all this," she said. "I have decided what is best to be done."

"And I, too, have decided, Jean," said Constance with tranquility.

Jean asked no questions.

"You are to tell Grendon Paul what he wants to know about your affairs, Ken," she said.

"Jean! And you know—you yourself told me—what it means to him," he replied.

"Yes, I know," Jean returned. "But things are different now. Now you, as well, are to be considered. I have a feeling, now, that it will come out all right. Tell him, Ken."

"Then I shall tell you," said Gridley. "And I'll begin at the big end. It is a declaration of war against you, Grendon Paul, against you and the interests behind you. I intend to increase the productive wealth of the new smaller nations of Central Europe and give them a chance to grow, instead of smothering their nationality under your domination as you are now doing. You, and the interests behind you, would ruin them by keeping their international exchange rate low, by making exports impossible, by stifling production under the heaviest possible costs. You, and your interests, would see them die as nations, in order that you may prove to the world that

a grave mistake was made in setting them up as separate states."

Grendon Paul frowned at him.

"You are talking Greek to me. What has all this to do with Istrian bonds?"

Gridley explained now at greater length.

"I started with Istrian bonds because they are low, and because they are held chiefly in France where I could most easily pick them up. It is all my affair, really; Penniman is merely backing me. Let me go back a bit. It is a fact—and if you do not know it, then the interests behind you know it—that an American, who sought to obtain concessions soon after the Versailles treaty was signed for the development of the vast water power in the hinterland of the Alps and along the Danube, was mysteriously stopped by some unknown powers from obtaining those concessions from the governments in question. That was I. By the use of the water power there I could have cut manufacturing costs in Istria to one fifth of what they are now, and so made Istria by this time a strong, self-reliant, and solvent country. But you, or the powers behind you, wanted Istria still to buy your coal at exorbitant prices; wanted to smother Istria and permit her no export trade. My development of Istria's water power would have ruined your plans completely; hence it was not granted me.

"Now, however, I have so arranged things that you must come out and fight me in the open, before the world, or grant me my concessions there. I control now the foreign indebtedness of Istria. To-morrow I can throw her into bankruptcy. I do not intend to do that, provided the Istrian government gives me the concessions I want. It may look like blackmailing the government into giving me what I want; it is in reality forcing you out from control there. And little by little I intend to extend my plans to include countries

adjacent to Istria. There is 'nothing more to be said about it, I think."

It was indicative of the man he was, that Grendon Paul gave no manifestation of his real thoughts. He merely said:

"No, there is no more to be said. I understand clearly, and time presses. Thanks. I shall be going now." Without waiting for another word, he turned on his heel and left the apartment.

The manner of his going—its brusqueness, its haste, its quality of ruthlessness—left a pall of sinister apprehension upon those left in the room.

Constance could not take her eyes off Gridley.

"And so," she broke the tense silence, her voice torn with bitterness and self-denunciation, "that is ended. It was not even permitted to me to save myself."

Gridley could not be reassuring, because he knew what it meant.

"Well, Connie, don't worry about it. There is still a chance——"

Constance interrupted.

"He will never let you out of Paris alive. I know him."

Gridley could only shrug his shoulders.

Constance now came nearer to him. "Ken," she said in a low, beseeching voice, "I want to talk to you." She saw Gridley looking at Jean Ballinger, and in her weary voice she begged: "Do you mind going away for a moment, Jean? I want to talk with Ken."

"Of course not," Jean agreed willingly. "Call me when you want me." She left the room.

Gridley, curious and still on his guard, waited for Constance to speak; and never, it seemed, had speech been so hard for her.

"Where and how to start, Ken," she said, "I scarcely know. I am so completely changed that I do not know myself."

"There is nothing that you need to

say, Connie. I know, and I am very happy——"

"You must listen to me, Ken. Why did I betray you in this fashion? Do you know?"

Gridley could say nothing.

"Oddly enough," she explained, "because I loved you so much. You hurt me terribly, down there at Demetra Craven's, when you spurned me. I was mad with the hurt of it. I felt that at any cost I must have my revenge. So odd it is that it was all because I loved you too much."

"Please don't. You make me feel——"

"Hear me through, Ken. This must be the last time that I talk with you as I must talk now. You told me—you have always told me—that if I could change, could be more that which you would have me be, that you could love me. Well, that change has come to me. Do you not know it?"

"Connie, I do know it. But—but Connie, it's—you can't——"

"But you can love me now, Ken, a moment—a moment only. That is all I ask."

Again Gridley could say nothing. She seemed to understand, and went on:

"Jean is for you, I know. She is yours, and for you, for all time. You are to go to her, Ken."

"You grieve me beyond description. Don't, I beg——"

"But let this be my hour, Ken, or shall I say my minute? It shall be no more than that. I must have it. I ask no more of you. It must suffice me for my life, for I know that I shall never love another man. One kiss, Ken, for me to remember into eternity. Let it even be Jean in your arms, if you will, so long as it is you in mine."

"Connie, it will be you—for this minute. The first time——"

"Yes, and the last, Ken."

A moment later shots rang out in the street below; came hysteric cries of

"Murder! Assassination!" There was the swift running of feet; the whistles of the guards; more shots.

Constance reeled back from Gridley's embrace.

"It is Grendon Paul," she gasped. "Queer that I should know it, but I do."

"Connie, give me now strength to leave you," begged Gridley.

She pushed him away from her.

"Go and see what it is in the street."

Gridley went out almost blindly.

"Jean, Jean, dear, will you come to me quickly?" Constance called.

Gridley was back in a very few minutes to find Jean and Constance standing arm in arm before the fireplace, waiting for him.

"Yes," he said, "it was Grendon Paul; shot as he left here."

Constance received the news with a strange tranquility.

"I knew it must be. Who shot him? Do they know?"

"Yes. Ferenczy," said Gridley, his voice shaken.

"Ferenczy!" cried Constance. "I might have known that, too. I could have guessed it from Ferenczy's tone as he left me to-night."

"And Ferenczy?" Jean inquired. "Did he escape?"

"No, dear," Gridley said. "I believe he did not try. He followed his victim—by his own hand. A brave man's death; there was nothing else that Ferenczy could have done."

Jean spoke:

"I had a feeling— Ken, watch Constance. Help me with her."

But Constance found a chair for herself.

"No, no, don't touch me again, Ken. I am all right. Rather a shock. Take me now, you two, back into the country with you, and show me, Jean, through your eyes—what was it you said? The hills and the stars, and the vastness of the universe at night, the only splendor, the only magnificence, beside which all this is nothing."

"And in them," said Jean, "you will find the strength you need."



FROM the Health Show comes the report that man, not woman, ranks first as a thing of beauty, but a popular vote would hardly endorse that opinion.



MAH JONG is not a game of chance but of skill, rules a judge in a gambling case. But great skill must have been necessary in the case of four wealthy Chinese who played the game for grains of rice. "East Wind" put over a master play by which his three opponents and their descendants for three generations had to cultivate twenty-five hundred acres of rice land to pay what he had won.



MORE cruel than the French aesthete's dictum, that no blonde could be considered beautiful, is the report from the divorce court that blondes do not make good wives because they are material, aggressive, restless, changeable, and fond of roaming. The judge says women with big noses, high cheek bones, and dark tresses are the only safe ones to marry; for they are thrifty, hard working, and sensible. But there is no fear among the blondes that their charms will fail.



A DANCER

By Beatrice Ravenel

Author of "The Message of Ginevra," "The Elimination of Fernando," etc.



WHAT'S the psychology of a male dancer, anyway?" demanded young Doctor Edgar Merrington.

Young Geoffrey Manners laid one silken instep tenderly over the other one that was cocked up on the piazza railing. He was feeling kindly toward the universe this evening. Merrington had just diagnosticated little Evie's trouble as common overeating, complicated by an acute attack of Manners temper, rather than anything more mysterious. Also, the double oleander, silver as fish scales worked into the spattered patterns of moonlit foliage, lay just beyond his toes, and the radiance came to him mixed with the perfume of the garden and the more distant tang of the sea. He was sensitive to such things. Moreover, as he always remembered at such high moments of beauty, he was actually married to Regina. He wondered whether the impression of novelty which persisted about the memory arose from the fact that Regina, in spite of three years of matrimony and Evie, was about the least married young woman he had ever met. There were disadvantages, infernal disadvantages, about her calm assumption of separate and unlimited freedom, but all the same she did give life piquancy; she did keep them from settling into a rut. A certain

artistic pride crossed his mind, a satisfaction with his own broad-mindedness. After all, he was a man capable of appreciating the piquancy instead of centering his attention on the disadvantages.

"A male dancer?" he repeated dreamily. "You open vistas. I see ranks of beautiful young men making ceremonial gestures like cameos. In temples, between tall green grotesques and columns and things. And bull-roarers—and lovely, carnivorous surges of feeling as the priest held up the oozing sacrifice to the devouring sun. Meaning, of course, what I think is the psychology of Marcos?"

"Naturally. He looks as though he ought to be kept in a cage."

"He does, rather. I like to watch him. Interesting chap until he begins to talk. What's your objection?"

Merrington set his obstinate shoulders straighter.

"Everything. He doesn't look—respectable."

Geoff lifted his feet and let them fall again, laughing delightedly!

"How sweetly cute of you!"

"You know what I mean. He doesn't look like a decent human being. Look at his mouth. You never see a decent American or Englishman with a moist pink mouth like that. And the way his hair grows, almost like fur, down the

nape of his neck—regular rudimentary mane. There's something wrong about him. I hate to see him turned loose among our nice girls; it puts me the wrong way."

"Seems to have behaved perfectly. No complaints."

Merrington struck a match. As the breeze flickered it out he tossed it aside irritably and forgot to feel for another.

"What's he doing here anyway? It seems to me that he would be too important a person in his own sphere to be coaching a charity show down here in Florida. He's a man you've heard of, so Vannie tells me."

"According to Regina, he isn't quite in the first light, but has danced with them and will be. You never know what reasons a man like that may have because he frequently hasn't any. He may want a rest, or to get away from the people he knows, or he may have—other reasons for lingering." Geoff's light tone suddenly pulled up as though at an obstacle. Merrington turned and strolled down the walk that led, like a strip of white velvet carpet, down to the gateposts from which the iron gates had been swung back for the season, in the easy manner of this colony. He twisted a leaf from the laurel that pushed itself between the spokes; then, as though making up his mind, he came back almost on a run.

"Geoff," he said abruptly.

Geoff blinked. He had not been asleep, only yielding to the influences of the hour, and he had rather hoped that Merrington would take himself off, or, better still, light a cigar at last and settle down into that companionship without words which would enable him to catch the phrases that were whizzing like insects around his head. They would fit into the short story he was writing; it needed a night exactly like this. Merrington had a sensible sort of reliability about him that gave a temperamental person like himself a sense

of safety as if the world were, after all, anchored to something solid. It wasn't like the doctor to be fluttery and hesitant; he was generally only too cocksure.

"Geoff," he repeated, biting his laurel leaf and speaking rather mumblingly in consequence, "what would you say if I purposed to do you the honor of entering your family?"

Geoffrey's mind was still on his own thoughts.

"Do you mean Evie?" he asked absently. "She's a sweet trick, but she's only two and three months. You'd have to wait some time." He sat upright as though moved by a spring. "You don't mean little Vannie, do you? Why she's a child."

"She'll be eighteen sometime."

"Will she though? How time gets away from you. Does she know?" he asked quite seriously.

The doctor threw away the rest of the leaf.

"Of course not," he exploded. "Don't you suppose that I've been telling myself every day and every night that she's a child? I know that as well as you do. It's an outrage and a shame for a girl as young as that to marry—to make a choice for life before she knows what life is, to shut all the other doors. Haven't I been in a fiery furnace about it?"

"Then why not wait?" asked Geoff with the sweet reasonableness awakened in us by our neighbor's troubles. "You're still in the flower of youth, my son. We're about the same age, and I'm not thirty nearly."

"You ass!" groaned out the doctor with whole-hearted virulence. "You blind, blatant ass! Don't you see that I don't dare to wait? If I don't marry her, somebody else will. You know it yourself. That's what you were driving at when you said that he might have—other reasons for lingering here."

"She wouldn't," said Geoffrey, stung

to the defense of his kindred. "She wouldn't be such a fool. Nice girls may amuse themselves with that sort of man, especially girls who take dancing as seriously as Vannie does, just as they take up other exotic fads, but they don't marry them—not girls of our world."

"Sometimes they do."

"Well, sometimes," conceded the other, "but not a girl who's been brought up like little Vannie. Why, she's Regina's first cousin."

The doctor gave a short laugh.

"Have any of you ever been able to foresee what Vannie will or won't do? When she left that top-notch school in New York because she said that she wasn't learning anything that would help her career all you said was that nice girls might take up dancing as a fad but they seldom became public performers. At present Vannie makes no secret of her intention to head that way."

"I know," agreed Geoffrey. He added with the simplicity of manner that hid considerable subtlety of thought, and went perfectly with his large, limpid blue eyes and rather moony attitudes. "Personally, I should welcome you into the family circle with open arms, and so would Regina. As for my father-in-law he would shed large tears of joy on your shoulder. His job as Vannie's guardian has been a serious one, though all her money came from the other side of the family, from the Kingstones, her mother's people. She had the greatest confidence in him because of his interest in reforms and his public spirit. He's the sort of person who never shirks jury duty, you know, and he's been on more boards and committees than any man living. The one thing he can't swing is Vannie. Sometimes I think he pushes moral suasion a bit too far." He solemnly extended his hand. "Between you and the stage I vote for you. Accept my blessing."

"As a choice of evils, I thank you," responded the doctor. "It won't be a

brilliant match, but I'm not dependent on my practice, you know. I can give her what she's used to, even if she hadn't anything of her own. You know who I am, as far as that goes. If you want a character with me ask Doctor Glenaire, of New York. He'll tell you that, if I follow his advice and go abroad and work under certain men—as I intended to do next year—I have a career of my own before me. I was an interne in his sanatorium for some time. My only fear is that Vannie's career will attract her more." He gave his short, uneasy laugh again. As he dropped down into a wicker chair near Geoff the chair gave a squeak of protest under his robust weight. He was a good-looking, big-boned man without superfluous flesh. Mindful of the sick baby in the house, with his doctor's seventh sense, he shifted his position gingerly. The two men smoked in silence for a few moments; then Geoff spoke between meditative puffs.

"I don't see why she shouldn't get on with you. You'd be infernally considerate of her, and she'll get resigned to the sheltered life when she has a kid or two to keep her at home—not right away, but when she's older." He paused, remembering that the kid hadn't exactly worked that way with his own wife. "I don't believe Vannie is the type to be happy on the stage. You know I saw something of that attractive genus, the female mime, when I had my play produced. I never had but one, but, as Mulvaney said, though I was rejected later, I was a corporal once. Kindly see that they grave on my tombstone that, with all my faults, I once had a play on Broadway. As I say, I saw actresses at the time. They were very nice to me."

"They would be."

"In a sisterly way" said Geoff primly. "That was during my young married days. I came to this conclusion. There's no reason that a stage person shouldn't

be a perfectly nice woman in every sense, but there is every reason, if she wants to get on, that she must be a self-centered woman. And that," summed up Geoff judicially, "is what I don't care for in a woman. I like her to be centered on me, or on whomever her husband happens to be. It's better and happier for him, and I honestly believe that it is for her, too."

"The sentiments of the meeting are unanimous," responded Merrington ironically. "That's the way every normal man feels. Unfortunately, I'm civilized enough to see both sides of it. It's a damned hard pull when a girl has to choose whether she'll center on her home or on her genius."

"Oh," remarked Geoff comfortingly, "little Vannie isn't as bad as that, Edgar. She's talented, but hardly a genius, I suppose."

"I devoutly hope not. And I hope even more devoutly that Marcos isn't persuading her that she is." He got up. "Have to go on now. Tell Regina not to worry; just to see that the powders are taken every two hours until the temperature is normal, and diet as directed."

"Better tell Miss Neal." The lines between Geoff's boyish-looking eyebrows deepened for a moment. "She'll remember. It's a blessing to have a resistent trained nurse in some ways. It leaves Regina freer, too. She's out this evening."

The reasons that the man who called himself Cleon Marcos had for being in Florida during the height of the theatrical season, instead of in New York or Paris or perhaps Athens, were, as he would have been the first to tell you, strictly his own business. Who, after all, has the right to question an artist as to his habitat? He obeyed the power of his impulses; he followed, as he might have said had he only read Shelley, the spirit of his feet. His feet

were among his most significant attributes.

At all events, one morning when pretty young Mrs. Geoffrey Manners had held up the whole line of wheel chairs in front of the great hotel, and had rather tentatively suggested to him that the charity entertainment which she was getting up for the Japanese relief fund was in need of a guiding and authoritatively artistic hand he listened quite graciously. Mrs. Manners was generally listened to. When he discovered that, though the play was to take place at the hotel, most of the cast was to come from the small but severely select colony a few miles away, which consisted principally of New York people in search of climate, and that as many of the rehearsals as possible had better take place in the clubhouse there, Marcos became more deeply interested and named a sum for his services which Regina knew to be absurdly reasonable.

"There's no use asking these people to take part," she explained, her glance sweeping the personnel of the piazzas and of the palm-edged road, which bloomed with the vivid color of sport clothes. "They're here to-day and gone to-morrow. Besides, the public is so much more likely to come to see us," she added without conceit, but as stating an undeniable fact. "You'll find us in earnest, Mr. Marcos."

Marcos smiled. He knew that the public would certainly flock to see what they called the real thing in society. Also, he knew what to expect in the way of work from amateurs. After the first try-out he decided that he had never met a more hopeless crowd. The standard of good looks was high, though not so high as among picked professionals, of course. The young ladies—they were so patently that—were pathetically anxious to do their best, but their best was—well, what could one expect? Dancing, in the opinion of Marcos, was not the business of young

ladies. They lacked the very essentials; they lacked the passion, the savagery, the abandonment on which the dance was based. Mrs. Manning came nearest to satisfying him, but she was already a little too heavy, not sinuous nor gracile enough. As for the rest, there was something about them that exasperated him. Perhaps what summed it up was his feeling that you couldn't touch them. If he could have caught them by the arm and yanked them to the back row, as he might have done other girls whom he had trained, he would have done something with them. But as artists they were negligible, impossible.

Until Mary Vance Miller came, the girl they called little Vannie.

One morning the rehearsal had been going badly. It had been found necessary to pad the play, which was, in deference to local feeling, an extravaganza based on the story of the Floridian fountain of youth. Geoff Manners had been running over some lyrics suggested by Marcos, the chorus coming in raggedly like a pack of half-trained beagles. Suddenly he stopped, frowned, and began sorting the sheets into two piles, one of which he handed to Marcos.

"We shan't need these," he observed coldly.

Marcos turned them over.

"Why not?" He disliked Manners, his calm superiority, a certain aristocratic simplicity about him, and the feeling put a bluster into his tones. "If they were good enough for Broadway—and they made a hit there— Oh, well, if you want a Sunday school entertainment—"

"We do," said Geoff imperturbably, "or what you mean by one. Come on, Dessie, we'll try that bit over."

Desmond Fisher, a tall, cadaverous youth with bright-red hair, opened his mouth and shut it again without uttering a note. He raised one leg and seemingly forgot to put it down, roosting on the other like a crane while he gazed

into the distance. He was the comic man, and the only person who was taking the play with deadly seriousness, being determined to infuse into it something of beauty and distinction. Being cursed with a humorous-cast of feature, he was always fated to be the comic man, even in real life. Whatever he did was funny.

"Wait. I've an idea," he uttered in his queer, high tones. "I was looking at some pictures—medieval stuff. Why can't we do a dance of death between the acts before they find the fountain? They used to dance them in the street, a sort of chain thing, and everybody dressed like the king, or the soldier, or the bride, or some stock character, meeting *Death* again and again in the dance until he captures them all. It would be great. Mr. Marcos could be *Death*, of course."

In his excitement, he began illustrating what he meant, dancing about the narrow platform at the end of the clubhouse ballroom, impersonating first one character and then another, improvising steps. In the midst of a courtesy which was to express the despair of the queen, he went over the edge. There was a shriek from the chorus. As Geoff said later, at least ten arms and legs and three red heads seemed to go through the air. Dessie gathered himself together, somewhat in the attitude of a spider, and continued his impassioned monologue as though there had been no interruption whatever.

"I'll be the fool," he said entirely seriously.

A sound from the opposite end of the room made Marcos turn suddenly. Somebody was sobbing. On Regina's shoulder an exquisite girl was rolling her bright head to and fro. Her voice was coming in agonizing gusts.

"Vannie—what's the matter? Has anything hurt you? Vannie—"

The girl lifted her face, screwed up into an indescribable mixture of expres-

sion, tears running down her pink cheeks.

"He—he's so *funny!*" she sobbed. "He did that just as if—he was *paid* to do it." She relapsed into gurgles.

Desmond, on the floor, tried modestly to dissimulate his feelings. Drake, when knighted by Queen Elizabeth, could not have looked very differently. This, it was evident, was the proud moment of his life; everybody knew that he adored Vannie.

Marcos himself could not have told when the vague idea crystallized into a determination. He had seen from the first that the girl was a born dancer, just as others might be born with a voice. He began to regret that certain other attractions had beckoned to him before her coming, and threatened to become entanglements. He wanted to devote himself to her and it was absolutely essential that he should be careful. The girl had the sort of beauty that roused curiosity, and she had, besides, a very individual quality. Temperament with the cachet of gentility was the nearest he could get to expressing it. And, what was also important, she had a great deal of money.

It was unfortunate for his plans that she should be staying with the Mannors. Ever since the episode of the songs Geoffrey, though always courteous, had not been a genial person to meet. Marcos understood that the dislike was now mutual, and he would have preferred remaining away from the house, a course which, for other reasons, was not practicable.

One afternoon, on arriving at the gate, he found Regina and her husband on the way out. Regina stopped the car to hail him gayly.

"There are some wonderful embroideries downtown," she began. "Just the thing for my costume. Lila Vincent told me, so I'm running off after them before the other women scoop them in. An Armenian has them, a man with the

most crossed eyes you ever saw and the most delicious name—you'd never guess it—Ananias! Doubtless most appropriate. Did you suppose that anybody was named Ananias?" She smiled into his eyes, a smile that was like a caress.

He forced himself to answer lightly. His sallow face had shown a curious gray tinge.

"It is not so unusual. They had a great astronomer named Ananias of Shiraz." After the car had passed he stood still for a moment, then shrugged his shoulders as he went through the gate without ringing the bell.

"Kismet," the shoulders seemed to say.

He found Vannie where he had expected to find her, in the garden, where high hedges shut off the view of the road, and a little fountain splashed in its round marble basin. There were oleanders here like huge bouquets, and orange trees, and a slightly overgrown effect which pleased Marcos because it reminded him of the gardens at home. The girl came to meet him with that reserved intensity he found so piquant.

"I've been practicing our dance," she told him. "Marcos, you do think I could be a professional, don't you?"

His dark eyes, just too near together in the handsome, pale face, considered her.

"Perhaps, if you were properly trained."

"I am trained," she answered with a touch of haughtiness. "I have had lessons from some of the best teachers in New York."

"Lessons for amateurs," he scoffed. He sat beside her on the marble bench and took her hand in his, in an experimental, impersonal manner, bending back the fingers. "You haven't any bones; that's one advantage. How would you like to have a bone broken in your foot, as some of the French dancers have? No, it's not necessary."

She braced herself, letting him keep

the fingers in his. If she was going to be a professional, she would have to get used to being handled. She ought to be glad that he hadn't touched her foot.

"If you like," he went on in the same cool fashion. "I can teach you some things while I'm here—if you're in earnest. I shouldn't care to waste my time on you otherwise."

The indifference thrilled her. He was beginning to treat her seriously at last as an artist, not with conventional compliment.

"Earnest?" she repeated. "Why, I'd do anything. Isn't it a shame that I have to wait? You know Regina's father, don't you? Well, he won't hear of it, and he has charge of everything I own until I'm twenty-one or marry. And I shan't be twenty-one for more than three years."

The garden murmured around them. It was like a continuation of its warm impersonality.

"Then why not marry?"

The girl laughed, a sharp little trill that was not quite at ease.

"Wouldn't that stop everything?"

"Not if you married the right kind of man." Marcos got up with the slow, feline grace that was a part of him, like his fine, slightly blunt features, and close-cropped black hair that resembled fur. As Geoff had said, all that he needed was a white star on the forehead. "I hadn't intended to tell you this so soon, but I will. As soon as I saw you I recognized the dancing partner I'd been looking for. You've got individuality. Together we'd have the world in a sling."

"Uncle Albert would never let me," she murmured, willfully misunderstanding him. "Art is all very well, but I'm going to be practical, too. I know better than to try to work up from the ranks and live on my salary. I want enough money back of me to do as I choose."

"Absolutely right. You want your own company." He stopped in front of her so that she had to look down to avoid his eyes. He knew that she was too proud to admit his dominance by looking down and his gaze fastened on hers and held it. "Marry me—as a matter of form if you like—and your fortune is your own. Instead of working up, you'd begin at the top. I shouldn't ask you this if I couldn't put you there. It doesn't do for me to blow my own trumpet, but I'm not a nobody."

Little Vannie's toes turned in. Her whole sensitive body drew together like a disturbed sea anemone. Then she answered very low:

"Yes, I know; I've heard of you."

"I'm glad of that." The hands that he held clasped behind his back were working nervously, but his voice remained cool and serious. "You'll think it over. You'll decide that's the wisest course." His clear-cut foreign tones planted the suggestion like darts into her brain. "I'm not going to worry you—either now or afterwards. Only remember that I'm there, at your service." At the gap in the hedge he paused. "On the other side they know me better than they do here." He presented it like the supreme credentials.

After he had left her the girl sat huddled on her corner of the bench, gazing into the pool of the fountain. It was too spattery to be a crystal, and there were deep green shadows in it among the rocks at the bottom, sinister, quivering shadows. In her absorption she did not notice two separate sounds that disturbed the sleepy air. One was the cautious shutting of a window in the house behind her. The other was caused by the footsteps of a solidly built young man on the gravel walk. At the window the face of a woman, a misty, blond face, vanished behind the thin curtains just as Merrington reached the fountain. This interview apparently did not interest her.

Vannie did not raise the chin which she held cupped in her palm. The implication that she desired to be left to her own meditations was not contradicted by her tone.

"Regina is out," she observed.

"I didn't come to see Regina. I passed Marcos as I came in," he added conversationally. "Lord, how the man hates me; almost as much as he hates Geoff. He's as bent as a silly woman on having his own way. If any one else had the voice for it, I'd have been kicked out of the part of *Ponce de Leon* before this."

"He's my friend," said Vannie. "He's going to help me."

He looked at her quickly.

"There's nothing to him, Vannie. As Geoff says, he has the kind of personality that expresses all sorts of ideas that he himself is absolutely devoid of. Don't accept favors from a man like that." He put his arm on the back of the bench, all but touching her shoulder. "Couldn't you care for something else besides this eternal dancing? Something that other women care for?" His voice was very gentle. "You seem to have a lap full of little Evie a good part of the time. Couldn't you care for—that?"

She glanced at the window where the muslin curtain hung innocently.

"She's all right again, isn't she?" She added, in a softened, quite frank tone: "I do love babies, but I prefer them to be somebody else's. Then you have the pleasure without the responsibility. However, I wouldn't be the sort of mother Regina is; she just shifts her responsibility to Miss Neal. All she can think about is the play, and the peacock trimming for her frock as the fairy of the fountain."

The doctor refrained from uttering his own gratitude to Miss Neal. It lightened his own responsibility considerably to trust his little patient in her capable hands.

Vannie swung around to him.

"Edgar, what's the most important thing in the world to you?" she demanded. Before he could answer she did. "Your work, your job. If you lost everything else, you could pick up that and make some sort of life out of it. That's the test of a real man. Well, dancing is my job. I was intended to dance. I care for it more than anything in the world." She held her little hands out tensely before her and clenched them. "Why does everybody get in my way? The nicest sort of women go on the stage now. You certainly haven't that old-fashioned idea that, if I went, I'd necessarily go to the mischief, have you?"

"Certainly not."

"Neither has Uncle Albert," wailed Vannie. "He's so reasonable and so right on every other subject, though I've never considered him a clever man, have you? He never got on any of the big boards during the war. But all he can say about my going is that he doesn't like it."

"I agree with him."

"But why—why?"

The doctor considered.

"It's partly hereditary. The men of this class never have liked their women to—belong to the public. They can't endure them to be at the mercy of public criticism, and"—his jaw grew hard and a small muscle by his mouth twitched—"and, even worse, of public admiration. I can't put it as plainly as I should like."

"Yes," said Vannie witheringly, "you belong to that class yourself. It's time it was shocked out of its evil-minded prejudices. An artist does belong to the world. Anyway, I needn't wait unless I want to. I can go on the stage—free—to-morrow, if I choose."

"How, I should like to know?"

"By marrying Marcos."

Merrington put his hand on her shoulder. "You couldn't," he said incred-

lously. "Why, Vannie, can't you see that the man isn't even a gentleman?" His voice shook.

"Of course I can't. According to you men, women never are able to tell. He's infinitely more—he's an artist." She had never seen Edgar really angry before and a hurt, wrathful impulse in her rose to meet him. They glared at each other, both moved to the depths.

"It's outrageous. It's impossible," said Merrington between his teeth. "Why, Vannie, you'd much better marry me!"

He had not meant to say it; nothing had been farther from his intentions; but it had been jerked out of him by the intolerable idea of losing her, above all of seeing her handed over to degradation and uncleanness. That was what Marcos signified to him. He understood how men killed the women they loved, rather than lose them that way. She had jumped up and stood, in her white dress against the dense dark hedge, like a burning, upright little flame, the proudest, cleanest, most rebellious little flame in the world. That—and Marcos!

"I suppose," she flashed, "that you want to marry me just to carry your point. It would be just like you. I wish you could see your own face. You've got a terrible jaw, Edgar; it looks as though you'd enjoy killing anybody who contradicted you."

"I want to marry you because I love you." Probably no lover ever uttered the crucial words in so relentless, so overbearing a fashion. "I can't get on without you." He stopped in a revulsion of feeling, humbled to the dust. This was Vannie whom he was fighting, whose will he was beating down! She was so young, too young to have a man's stormy love thrust upon her. She was a child; he was threatening a child with his unseasonable, summer hurricane of love.

"I beg your pardon, Vannie," he said gently. "I'm ashamed of myself. But

I mean to look after you; you can't prevent my doing that." He walked away with bent shoulders, and the girl, watching him, put her hands to her bright hair. She felt as though the garden were still full of a strong wind that had gone through it, tossing the trees and filling her own mind with a tumult she could not understand.

The night of the performance arrived with rather more tension in the air than such crises generally provoke. The dress rehearsal, true to type, had been hopeless. Marcos and the masculine portion of his cast were on terms of armed neutrality, though over the girls he continued to exercise a dominance that was uncannily like fascination. After one glance at Marcos' gorgeous appearance as the *Spirit of Adventure*, whose interpretative dance formed the prelude, Dessie Fisher reluctantly saw the point.

"Doesn't he look like a young Greek god, instead of like a bootblack or a fruiterer?" he asked gloomily of Geoff, and as the other answered with a look of disgust he went on. "The crowd out there is simply eating him up. It's going big, I fancy."

There was no doubt that the play had been launched, and when Dessie himself, as the camp cook, had followed with a topical song, written by Geoffrey and full of local hits, the audience was responding to the stage like two waves flowing together. The feeling of getting together, that every actor knows and works for, was in full swing. When the curtain went down on the first act Spaniards, Indians, and fabulous characters fell into each other's arms and performed a measure that was not on the program.

"Stop that noise," Marcos ordered sharply. "Clear the stage for the Dance of Death. I hope you got it over, doctor, that *Ponce de Leon* was about to plunge into the perils of the wilderness."

He himself was already in his cos-

tune. He had refused to wear the traditional skeleton, and had evolved instead a very beautiful arrangement in black and white that suggested a death's-head moth. When the dance began, however, very gayly, the long lines of characters in their brilliantly various costumes first sweeping across the stage, then interrupting the chain with quaint steps that were like little dramas, there was no doubt as to the identity of the tall white shape that was glimpsed here and there. At first there were only glimpses, but as the music grew wilder, and sheets of sunset color began to cross the air, paling to smoky saffron or deepening to livid magenta, the great white figure dominated more and more until the reeling throng about him was only the foil to throw him forward. The music broke into wails and shrieks of melody, always rhythmic; the dance was a frantic attempt at escape, caught up again into the unbreakable chain. *Death* was everywhere. He bore the bride from her lover, fainting over his arm. The king yielded his crown to the victor. When Merrington, as the soldier, surrendered his sword to the unearthly thing an authentic shiver went up his arm. It would be like that sometime; he would be taken out of the lights and the music, and that full sense of living that was with him these days, and be dragged away into the dark. Marcos was rather wonderful.

As he dropped out into the wings he stood there to watch one of the last of the measures, *Death* and the witch. She was Regina, a beautiful young sorceress, and Merrington found himself wondering why he had never known before that Regina was a great actress. Instead of fleeing from *Death* she used her arts to charm him. One would have sworn that she was enamored of *Death*, that she clung to him from love and not from terror. When they danced away, and the stage went black for a moment, the doctor stood, absently pulling at his

fringed gloves, trying to understand some suspicion that evaded him. The gloves were tight, and he decided that it was not worth while to remove them just to tear them on again for the next act.

Into the dark the music began dripping like dew into the quiet before the dawn. Little by little, pearly gray lights flushed into pink over the canebrake at the back of the stage. The flowers that covered the vines on either side flickered out dreamily.

"What's this?" asked Merrington quickly. "Something new?"

Dessie, at his elbow, nudged for silence.

"Surprise. Dance of butterflies. Some idea of renascence. You know *Ponce* does find the fountain."

From under the canes a small green chrysalis thing moved, wriggled out, stood upright, the youngest, limpest butterfly ever seen. It looked positively damp. Tentatively, with a divine awkwardness, it felt its way through the blossoms, languid, half awake. Then, in a blaze of gold, the sun rose, and the butterfly expanded like a fountain. It was the joy of life; it was the wings of the morning; it was Vannie! He had never seen anything more beautiful, anything that danced as though such rhythm were the law of its nature, as though it had been born so. For an instant he wondered whether he was not taking an indefensible liberty with the obvious intentions of fate in trying to keep this miracle from its manifest destiny. Then he justified himself.

Into the sunlight space, where the young butterfly was weaving her fancies in fairy shadows, a second butterfly moved. Marcos had not taken off his death's-head moth costume; even the long, cruel, silver dagger of *Death* still hung at his belt; but he had covered it with a tissue of red and gold that transformed him into a sort of butterfly of prey, and great threatening wings

hovered on his shoulders. In an instant the dance had changed. No longer the glamour of unawakened youth but the thrill of danger informed it; it had become the ancient love dance. The advance and the retreat; the appeal, fled from until its hypnotic power gradually overcame the will; the half-piteous surrender; then, at last, the response where fear was forgotten and the two souls touched. It was unmistakable, every step of it. Then came the moment when the male butterfly caught to him the quivering little figure, and both left the ground, and floated out of sight.

Merrington stepped into the shadow to give them room to alight. As she touched the floor Vannie wrenched herself away from her partner, and threw out her arm. Her face was distorted with fury; her breath came in gasps. With her other hand she was rubbing her mouth violently, like a child. She fell back into the dusk like a child hiding.

Marcos, taking a step toward her, found an arm like an iron bar in his way.

"Come on the piazza a minute," said Merrington quietly. "I want to speak to you."

Marcos looked him up and down.

"The curtain goes up right away. You're on."

Desmond Fisher hurried up.

"They're crazy about it in front. Listen to them. It sounds like a storm. Speaking of storms, it's begun to pour."

Merrington caught his arm.

"Take your ukulele and the girls on. Sing that fool song of yours about the 'Bashful Young Head-hunter'—"

"Seventeen verses?"

"Make up some more if those give out. Do any darned thing you please to hold them, but don't leave that stage till I give the word."

Dessie rose to the occasion. It was his private bit of self-congratulation that he could take a hint without explana-

tions, and he made a highly successful entrance with a song many of his audience had heard before, and the most innocuous set of hula girls ever presented on any stage.

On the piazza Marcos stood with his back to the railing, backed by long lines of rain, the light from inside shimmering on his gold thread and the velvety white of his tunic—a fantastic figure. In front of him stood Merrington with the effect of penning him into the curve of the balustrade. He spoke almost cheerfully.

"There's a strip of ground by the river," he said. "Pretty place—some trees and nice flat ground—the old dueling ground. I suppose you wouldn't care to see it?"

Marcos laughed insolently.

"I forgot you were a Southerner. What would be the use? You've been killing things all your life, I suppose, while I've never had a gun in my hand off the stage."

"You wouldn't care to settle it in a more—natural way?"

The other's nonchalance caved in.

"You hulking brute," he snarled.

"How much chance would I have against you?" He glanced down at his long, beautiful legs. "Besides, if I got injured, I might never be able to dance again, and you'd do your damned best to dish me."

"I hardly fancied you'd accept," observed the doctor calmly, "but I thought I'd give you the chance. Will you leave town to-night?"

"No, damn you!"

"I think you will." Merrington put out his hand and turned it so that the light glittered on a small object. "I should like to shoot you; I should find deep satisfaction in putting one clean hole in your vile carcass, but I'm going to deny myself the pleasure. You'll go."

Marcos threw back his shoulders. His manner became itself again.

"What business is it of yours?" he

sneered. "If she's willing to marry me——"

"Stop," Merrington interrupted him. "She isn't going to marry you. For one reason, you have a wife already."

The man peered at him through the dusk. After a pause he said in an entirely different tone.

"You are wrong. I was divorced three years ago."

"You are divorced in some States but not in others. The jig's up, Marcos. I know all about you. I know that you weren't born in Athens, as you say, but in——"

The other's frantic hands almost reached his mouth.

"Don't say it," groaned Marcos. "He told you, then?"

"He?" repeated the doctor, puzzled. "No."

"I will go to-night. I knew when he came that I should have to go, though he does not know me under this name. I have kept out of his way, and if he had seen me to-night he would not have known me through this disguise." The man was shaking. "I will go." With a quick, sinuous wriggle he was around Merrington and had vanished through an open doorway.

The doctor went back to the wings thoughtfully. So there were depths under depths in this man, abysses he had not suspected. He had no idea who the individual was whom Marcos feared, but he had other matters to consider at present. There was an interview in front of him in which neither firearms nor threats would be of the slightest assistance. He tapped on the door of Vannie's dressing room. When a small, frightened head emerged he said, as he had said before:

"Come on the piazza, please. Put a wrap on; it's raining cats and dogs."

She shrank back.

"Did you kill him?" she breathed, horrified.

His eyes followed hers to the glitter-

ing thing in the hand that was still gloved in the fringed leather that had been too much trouble to take off. He slipped the automatic in his pocket.

"No," he answered, smiling, "didn't have to."

When he had her alone outside, with the rain drumming on the piazza roof over them, and the gusts of music and applause coming steadily through the windows, he put his hand lightly on her shoulder.

"He won't trouble you again, Vannie. You'll never see him again. And now won't you think of what I told you the other day? Don't you understand what I meant. I can't bear you to belong to the world. You're sacred to me. You can't imagine the sick, abominable wrath it creates in me to feel that you'll be put up for the world to stare at, with every hideous claw and tentacle of it reaching out for you. Can't you understand it—now?"

She drew away.

"You don't trust me," she said tensely. "You don't trust me."

"Little Vannie, little Vannie, you don't trust yourself. You're a little flame, and life will come and pick you up like a big flame, and away you'll go together. If I let you go, I'll never get you back again. I want to keep you safe. I don't want it to be in any man's power to make you suffer as that ruffian made you suffer to-night. Won't you come to me, Vannie?"

"Oh, I don't know," she cried, burying her head in her hands as she had done in the garden. The great wind, stronger than the wind that was thrashing the palmettos, was threatening to carry her to him instantly, and she was not at all sure that she wanted to go.

"For Heaven's sake, Edgar!" came Geoff's impatient voice from the doorway. "Dessie's sent word that he's dying at his post, but he can't attenuate the death agonies forever. Call him off." Geoff had been irritable all the

evening, and short and sarcastic in his answers.

"All right, Geoff." As Vannie vanished into the dusk Merrington returned to his duty. How he got through his part he never knew. He found himself tugging at his gloves and declaiming lines of which he had forgotten the meaning. After the grand finale in an eddy of the general tumult he came upon Regina wandering about with the same nervous excitement he was suffering under.

"Howling success," she said. She pressed her hand to the flat, satiny dark hair that lent her clear-cut features their full importance, especially in a company of curled and waved women. "This crown has given me the most awful headache. I've just heard that our car isn't to be found, and a storm is raging."

"Let me take you home."

"You couldn't take us all in your car. No, I'd rather spend the night here. Vannie looks all in, too. Oh, there Geoff is." She was engulfed, melting into the crowd.

Merrington lay awake a long time that night, listening to the peculiarly exciting noise of the wind. The palms about his house slashed and cut each other. The metallic sweep of water on the roof was incessant. Flashes of lightning came with stabbing virulence. After he had dropped into a troubled sleep he was haunted by that undercurrent of savagery that detestation of a fellow man lets loose. He was engaged in an age-long struggle with Marcos, peeling from him the white, glittering arms and legs that clung to him like the limbs of a devilfish. He was striking out against him, trying to bear him down.

A banging at the door awakened him. The wan light of early morning came through glass that was dotted with wet, blown leaves. Merrington dragged himself across the bed and opened the door without getting up. Dessie Fisher tumbled rather than came in. His clothes were dripping, and he struggled with the umbrella, which he had forgotten to close, as it caught in the aperture.

"Come to the hotel right away," he panted. He shoved back the strands of red hair plastered over his eyes. "Though you won't be able to do anything—except make out a death certificate."

"Whose?" Afterwards Merrington knew that he had expected the answer. He had been killing the man all night in his mind.

"Marcos. The watchman found him early this morning, on the piazza outside the stage door, where that curve is."

"Dead?" An echo came to him of the anguish, the Pagliacci effect, that the jester of the Dance of Death had evoked from his guitar.

"Thoroughly dead. Blood washed all around him, mixed with the rain," the boy stammered, as though his teeth were chattering. "You know that toy dagger he wore with the *Death* costume? And—it wasn't a toy. Half of it is in his throat."

Merrington went over and took him by the shoulders, talking straight into his eyes.

"Dessie," he said, "you hated him, too—on her account. You didn't do it, did you?"

Desmond shook his head. His pale blue eyes were full of tears.

"No, I swear I didn't, but—I saw him kiss her, and—I almost wish I had!"

TO BE CONCLUDED.





Chiaroscuro

By Katharine Newlin Burt

Author of
"The Branding Iron," "Snow Blind,"
"Summoned," etc.

MORNING.

A YOUNG negro was singing on a Carolinian hillside. As he sang he worked, bending and straightening over the cotton plants with a rhythmic regularity, so that the labor of his muscles seemed rather the accompaniment of his song, than the song, a mitigation of his drudgery. His great soft voice poured itself all around as an autumn wind pours itself across the world, carrying without effort and with resignation the burden of its sorrowfulness.

"Ah have a life so sad and weary;
Ah've got to live it ba myself.
Ah have a grave so dark and dreary;
Ah've got to go tha ba myself."

It was as though the singer had groped until he had laid his dark hand upon the essential tragedy of human life, its stark and unavoidable loneliness, had discovered, accepted, made it his own, and now interpreted it in admirable patience. His eyes every time he bent swept across the pine-clad valley and picked up its silence as though it had expressed in a sentence all that there was of life's renunciation. It said that here among the pines, the cotton, and the cornfields, he must labor alone, wonder alone, and die alone; that no protest could soften that doom pronounced upon his ignorance at birth. His dark and wistful face brooded resignedly.

"Ah've got to live it ba myself."

He plucked the cotton, handful by handful, and dropped it into the waiting basket, moving along the hillside in the sand without any sound beyond the great soft sound of his own singing.

"Ah've got to go tha ba myself."

Above the negro, on the porch of a small clapboard house, new and unpainted, cheaply constructed, and uncurtained in all its lidless windows, the negro's employer frowned down the hillside at the opening day. There was much to be done, the frown said, and there were few hands to do it. Shirley Brent figured that the orchard work would have to stand over, important as it was, until the beginning of next week, as the cotton picking must be got through with in any case, and the corn shucking, too.

He took a stubby pencil from his pocket and figured against the gray shingles of the wall. A shallow profit might remain to him after the year's straining, anxious labor. He knit his face up resolutely, a keen young sun-bitten face, steely-eyed. Already around these eyes there had begun to be the little wrinkles of shrewd and small anxieties. Of such pinchings, however, are made the larger graspings of success, and, whatever else had been lost, the possibility of success remained, remained forever. Work, industry, achievement—God's curse and man's salvation. Shirley had clamped the fingers of his spirit round this pragmatic con-

solation. He would waste no emotional energy upon unhappiness, or its resigned philosophies. He had failed once—admitted; and the failure had been followed by an unforgettable quarrel which had cost him the warm shelter of his love. There remained determination. The heart of the young man was battered down into the dark; self-control had shot all the bolts and mounted guard. Not all the softness and mournfulness of the day, rising like a slow tide across the valley, could weaken him. The negro's voice beat upon his stiffened mind with muffled blows:

"Ah've got a life so dark and dreary;
"Ah've got to live it ba myself——"

and Shirley grinned sardonically.

Self-pity, that was the keynote to the negroid psychology. No white man would ever wail out his heart for loneliness while there was work to do. He pulled tighter his belt about his lean, hard middle, and strode with a Northerner's crisp stride across the smothered field, to the dumbness of which at last the negro had given a voice.

NOON.

The cool softness of morning slid, like a girl stepping reluctantly into steaming water, into the oppressive heat of noon, a stagnant warmth in which the pines' long iridescent needles quivered to indistinguishable movements of the atmosphere, and sent out sparks of rainbow light. The silver soil glittered like an empty plate. A mocking bird sang arrogantly, delighting in his virtuosity, filling the valley with his heartless noon-day elegance.

The negro was silent. He stopped at the corner of the cotton patch, straightened his magnificent body, and mopped his wet, receding brows. The pine shadows so near the border of his flaring foothold lay about the roots like discarded brown and purple garments.

The boss was entertaining Yankee vis-

itors. A motor had swept up the hillside, made a glittering, black arc of motion, and stopped before the porch. The quick, low Northern women's voices, more cultured and more tripping than the nasal drawing of the South, went chippering about the small bare house. The boss was excited and absorbed. His negro had seen in one glance, by the rigid and arrested pose of head and body as the motor came through the gate, that its arrival was potent and disturbing.

It was noon. The laborer left his cotton patch and lumbered swiftly down the hillside, flinging his body into the scented coolness of the woods. An umber path led him to a trickle of dark water, and here a negro girl, tall, grave, full-bosomed, with a pickaninny sparkle in her eyes, looked at him over her shoulder, and then knelt with her back to him and drank from the brook. He squatted close beside her, put his hand on her neck, and ducked her. She came up shining like a wet coal, screaming softly, showing laughter in all her beautiful large square teeth. She boxed his ears.

"How yo' dast, yo' Tom!"

He chuckled rapturously.

They stood up and looked at each other. Their merriment had vanished as rapidly as a bird. The girl's pickaninny eyes softened and dulled, and her round throat moved as though some tiny animal climbed up and down under its smooth skin. She lifted her eyes to him, giggled, and spread her fingers all across her face. Tom looked about him.

"Honey," he murmured, "li'le honey Sue. I sho' am crazy about yo'."

She snuggled against him, rubbed her soft woolly head to and fro across his bare throat. Again he looked about, all around carefully; saw a bobbing rabbit and a balanced bird; then, wrapping her up in his great arms, he lifted her warm round weight and carried her down into the bushes beyond the spring.

Shirley was serving luncheon to his unexpected guests. A stout colored woman, delighted with the flurry of a domestic crisis, had "shooed" him out of her kitchen.

"Go 'long and set up dat table while I cook them folkses up a mess o' chicken and waffles and co'n."

Margaret helped him set the table—slim, cool-skinned Margaret with her guarded, shining eyes, which a few months before had sharpened themselves and plunged again and again into his heart. She had stopped on her way to Florida with Mrs. Temple to tell him that she had forgiven him. She did not inquire concerning his forgiveness; that, it would seem, was either taken for granted or its need considered an unjustifiable assumption. She had planned foresightedly, Shirley had to admit, swallowing something hard which may have been his pride, for he had not yet explained his own long-cherished resentment, the hatred he had heaped upon his memories of her, the battered emotions which he had not allowed to torture him. He kept silence, and accepted her forgiveness, and sat feasting his eyes upon her while she did justice to the cooking of Lorraine.

Mrs. Temple was as he remembered her—all polished and perfumed and as musically, amazingly vocal as the mocking bird. Shirley could not equal the brilliance or the cordiality of his two guests. The months of his lonely, drudging absence from their world had hardened and had silenced him. They had given him, however, an unconscious splendor of lean muscle, brilliant color, and keen eyes, to which the excitement of their unexpected intrusion had added a dumb, pathetic glow.

After lunch Mrs. Temple was merciful, or perhaps merely obedient, and left him alone with Margaret on the top step of the porch, going herself indoors to discuss routes with her chauffeur.

Shirley jerked away into the sand a

half-smoked cigarette and leaned forward, his hand creeping across the hot, dry boards until it touched Margaret's skirt. She let her blue eyes drop and rest on the brown mute fingers.

"Did you come here—just—to tell me that it was—peace between us?" he forced himself to say, feeling the urgency of flying minutes.

Margaret folded her cool, thin hands together across her gloves. She looked beyond him now to the valley side, and her face balanced its expressions resolutely.

"I came after a great deal of careful thinking, Shirley. You see, at first, even if we hadn't quarreled so terribly, it did seem to me quite impossible that we should marry."

"Because I had—nothing?" he asked painfully.

"Yes. Because you had nothing." The words presented no difficulty to her self-possession. "I felt perhaps it would be kinder to let you go on thinking that I hated you."

"Perhaps," he muttered, turning half away, his fingers pressing down against the boards.

"But—I couldn't. I missed you too much. I tried every kind of distraction and suppression. I sat on my heart all day and half the night. I danced on it. Nothing helped. I just kept seeing, hearing, feeling you. It was unbearable. It kept getting worse. I've suffered really to my limit."

His hand leaped up to, and fell over, both of hers.

"Wait—a minute, please!" She shut her eyes, frowning, holding him back. "I want to make it clear to you. You've put the last dollar of your fortune into this place—this orchard?" She awaited his reply.

He nodded, his dry, hungry eyes upon her lips.

"How long will it be, Shirley, before you know?"

"Before I know—what?" he muttered,

his whole mind focused on the soft red motions of her speech.

"Before the orchard bears? Before you're fairly certain of a livelihood?"

"Oh!" He drew back, put his head on his locked hands, and under them stared across the sloping patch into the pines. A little throaty scream of laughter came drowsily from down among the shadows—some negro wench, he thought, fighting off kisses. He spoke dryly and slowly.

"It will take three years for my peach trees to come into bearing. Two years more for me to be sure of anything. Five years, Margaret."

He did not look at her, and for several of his heartbeats she sat still.

Mrs. Temple's voice rose pointedly indoors.

"So it will be a matter of six or seven hours, Griffin, before we can make the next stop-over, even if we don't meet with detours?"

Margaret began to gather up her gloves, and her body seemed to be gathering itself coolly together for departure.

"Five years. I'm twenty-four." She sighed. "If I can—if I can—I will wait five years for you, Shirley Brent."

He found that he had caught her hands and was kissing them. His brain hated the humility of this gratitude and this emotion, but, through such humility, he might beguile her lips; surely in another moment he would taste her lips—

Mrs. Temple cried effusively from the opened doorway:

"Oh, what a perfect view off there across your valley, Mr. Brent!"

Margaret stood up and hastily pulled away her hands.

NIGHT.

But with dusk the mocking bird changed his melody. He had forgotten the world and its applause. He was the merest lover. He lisped in the

moony darkness while the whip-poor-will lashed out for him monotonous intervals:

"Come, come—pretty, pretty girl—come quick!"

Shirley sat hunched against his veranda post, his teeth clenched on the stem of his old comfortable pipe, his arms locked across his chest. The muscular weariness of his usual day was rest compared to the profound fatigue Margaret had left upon his mind. The gentle Southern night, so soft and shining, so perfumed that it produced a wistful uneasiness, only sharpened his belated sense of the irony of this day's experience.

She would wait, if she could, Margaret had told him at the end of her shrewd questioning, for five years. She had let him kiss her hands. But her lips had gone away cool and uncrushed by any knowledge of his urgency. Five years, while night after summer night, and, again after a little silence, night after soft April night, the mocking bird would be at his calling: "Pretty—pretty, pretty girl—come to me—quick!"

Shirley moved, jerking his taut body, pressing his shoulders hard against the sharp edge of the post. In the cabin below the slope a light shone suddenly, yellow as an orange, and there began to be music, a shuffle of feet, loud laughter. The syncopated beating set his mind jerking and his foot moving on the step. It seemed to beat him back to a simplicity of animal pleasure, a mesmeric, everlasting throb, throb, throb, forgetful of everything except itself, as a healthy heartbeat is forgetful.

Margaret would wait five years—if she could. The young man, honored by this promise, his face painfully twisted, wondered, and bit his lips from wondering aloud: "Is that love of hers, so carefully balanced and controlled, really worth a man's waiting for?" He forced the question back, swallowed it like a bitter mouthful, and let it saturate into

the silences of his repression. After all, there would be during the five years still his work. He stretched his arms and folded them in a hard knot above his head. Silently he sat there, pondering.

In that cabin below him under the shaken golden light of a lantern on a nail, Tom held his solid black wench close against him, and they moved together in a small space, shaking their shoulders and swaying their supple hips. The girl's head, with its wool spread out wide, was tilted far back, and she danced with her eyes on his. Their lips were apart and smiling; their eyes

gleamed with a languorous, hypnotized laughter.

The old negro who worked his accordion in a corner sang and chuckled softly, "Da lonely, all-left-alone blues!"

And the dancers broke into a loud, soft shouting, taking up the syncopated chorus of the song:

"Ah get da blues—ebery time ma honey
leaves me—Ah get da blues—
Da lonely, left-alone blues."

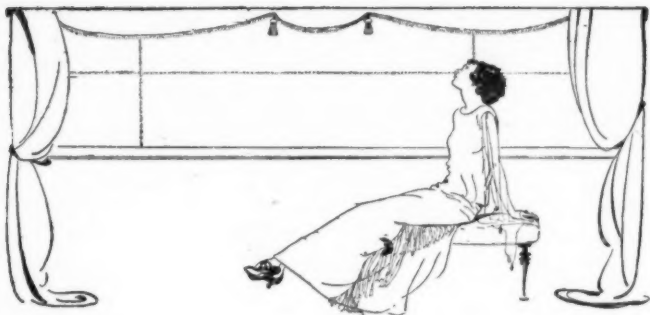
They chuckled and swayed, and their dark bodies pressed closer. There was in them no awareness of anything beyond the throbbing of their entire contentment.

THE young American, coming from a college whose students are noted for their self-sufficiency and indifference, visited his titled cousin in London. Into the paneled drawing-room hung with armorial bearings and ancestral portraits quietly walked an impeccably dressed young man, unannounced and with the bearing of a Cæsar. With a splendid air of assurance the young student looked over the newcomer intently and said under his breath: "Who the devil do you think you are?" A deep hush fell upon the historic room. It was impossible to know if the dapper young man had heard the query when the mistress, making a deep courtesy, amazed her young cousin by replying: "I have the honor to present you to the Prince of Wales."

LOST: thirteen days. This extraordinary loss of time is due to the substitution overnight of the Gregorian for the Julian calendar for all the peoples of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The same shift was made in America in 1752. At that time George Washington moved forward his birthday from the 11th to the 22nd of February. Even the present calendar might be improved, and to that end the League of Nations has appointed a committee to consider the feasibility of a year of thirteen months of four weeks each.

IS Deauville's brilliance growing dull since the Prince of Wales favors Le Toquet near Calais? Last year King Alphonso of Spain, King Albert of Belgium, King Ferdinand of Roumania, the Shah of Persia, and Prince Christopher of Greece were all at Deauville, but this year the golden sands and brilliant drawing-rooms were not favored with their presence. Deauville flourishes on royal patronage, and is looking forward jealously to a return of regal favor.

JAPAN has caught the golf fever, importing golf balls and golf engineers from America. They even borrow our technical terms, since the Japanese language has no terms such as tee, niblick, bunker, midiron, etc. One course is built high in the mountains, the only approach being by sedan chairs carried by coolies.



The Cypress Branch

By Berthe K. Mellett

Author of "Tide of the Tavenners," "The Gift," etc.

COUNT INAN INANOVICH STOLOI lay on his bed in Stephan Dempster's rambling old house on Long Island Sound and took partial revenge for his wrongs in despising his host. Looking about him from under the ball-fringed tester of one of the finest maple four-posters that American colonial days had handed on to their successors, he condemned the dimities blowing inward from the windows, the hooked rugs on the broad plank floor, the ancient pine secretary with the initials of the Dempster who came on the *Mayflower* cut under the iron lock.

How like his uncle-in-law-to-be was this insufferable place. Fresh—if you gave the word both its primary and its secondary meaning. Stephan Dempster was fresh, and his house was fresh, and the attitude which house and master assumed toward the noble fiancé of the heiress to it all was maddeningly fresh. Had Stephan Dempster opposed with wrath the marriage of his niece Stephanie with Count Stoloi, that gentleman would have known exactly what to do. He would have played upon the

bread-and-butter sympathies of the romantic, boarding-school miss until she so compromised herself that the subsequent marriage was at Stephan Dempster's frenzied solicitation and attended by a lengthy unwinding of that gentleman's fat purse strings.

But Stephan Dempster did not appear to actively oppose the marriage. Passive resistance, the most baffling of all forms of warfare, seemed better to suit his humor. Standing back, he smiled and opened windows, as though for the pure winds blowing through the house to purge it of some unclean thing. Inan Inanovich did not like open windows. He had long avoided England because of the open windows. If it was hot, they let in the heat. If it was cold, they chilled whoever sat near them into unbecoming blueness, revealing his age and such marks as life and other things had left upon him.

But deeply as he resented the open windows, it was Stephan Dempster's attitude in regard to Stephanie that most bitterly stirred the spleen of Count Stoloi. Dempster seemed to have no fear that pollution of any kind could

touch the girl. This was the final insult to a man known in three courts of pre-war Europe for his—well, his amusements. And seeing Stephanie in the light of her uncle's confidence, Stoloi was aware of an uncomfortable suspicion that Dempster was right. Virginity of the body is one thing, but virginity of the mind is another. It has unexpected, disconcerting, and perpetual faculties for protecting itself. It throws out a shell, and then hardens that shell into deceptive, tender-toned steel. Stephanie Dempster might be an unpleasant wife. For that matter, she was an unpleasant fiancée, with her everlasting artlessness and her blushes. Artlessness and blushes were not the virtues Count Stoloi sought in women. In fact, had her wealth not gleamed behind her like the rising sun of his own returning fortunes, Inan Inanovich would certainly never have looked twice at the pink-and-white little American in the Swiss school where he was employed as fencing master. His preference was for pallid faces, rather than glowing ones; for inky hair, rather than babyishly curling brown. However, he was prepared to endure Stephanie to just the extent necessary for his purpose. So, after all, it was not Stephanie who troubled Count Stoloi as he lay in bed that spring morning. It was Stephan Dempster, who did not appear to take him seriously, even as a menace.

The night before, upon introducing his prospective nephew-in-law to a youth who, it seemed, had made some American sort of howling success with a book, but who, for all his reputed intellectualism, hovered over Stephanie's innocuousness with calflike devotion, Dempster had drawn his long humorous face down, and his long humorous frame up.

"Babson," he had said, "this is the gentleman to whom our Stephanie has engaged herself. He is a count. His title was bestowed by the czar."

The youth addressed withdrew, for a moment, his attention from Stephanie. His manner of doing so was a final exasperation. It was as though he, too, discounted the menace of Inan Inanovich.

"How do you do," he had said, pushing back a flaming red lock which had fallen across his eye: "I had quite forgotten there ever had been a czar. Why, Dempster"—he turned to his host—"who knows? I may be a count myself. Just now I seem to have a kind of theosophical recollection of Carthage, and of Hannibal's ennobling me."

Instead of striking the affront to his guest back upon the lips which had uttered it, uncle-in-law coughed lightly as though to disguise something which was not at all a cough. Being, above all, discreet, Inan Inanovich did not make good the dereliction of his host. There was always to be feared that, driven wrongly, Dempster might hit upon the one way to effectually interfere in the affairs of his niece. He might withdraw himself from responsibility for her, both moral and monetary. Or again, an attack upon her countryman might call up some unknown strength in Stephanie, might awaken some sleeping shrewdness and perspicacity—such shrewdness and perspicacity as looked out of Stephan Dempster's eyes and appraised all too accurately the stranger within his gates. Ah, that was it! Under the excitement of hitting upon the answer to a riddle that had perplexed him for weeks, Inan Inanovich sat up in bed and reached for the gold cigarette case which had been Stephanie's first gift to him. That was it, then! That was the reason for the watchful-waiting attitude of Dempster, for the undisturbed impertinence of the man who had written the book and was manifestly in love with Stephanie. They awaited her awakening. Awaited the time that some revelation of himself in Inan Inanovich should startle her

out of the dream of her girlhood into the strength of womanhood. Even Americans, for all their stupidity in such matters, were aware that some day a woman awakes in every girl. But—

He lit a cigarette and smiled. Americans may know that much, and still not have exceeded their limit of half truths. Continentals, however, know that there is not one woman, but two, even in the most pink-and-white *jeune fille*, and that it is a mere question of method and personality in the awakener, which one shall rouse. One of these women may be dull with the dullness of the seven deadly virtues, while the other may—

A pebble struck the window of his room and, taking the brocaded dressing gown which had been Stephanie's second gift to him, Inan Inanovich crossed a veritable wilderness of hooked rugs and leaned upon the casement and looked down.

Two figures stood below: a man and a girl. The man was rather long and lean, but his companion was undeniably small and bright and pretty in the morning sun. Queer he had never seen that brightness in Stephanie Dempster before, thought Inan Inanovich as he leaned across the casement and smiled. Perhaps because he had never thought of the woman who might be awakened in the rather annoying child. Now he did think of that woman, and the thought set other thoughts to spinning through his head. For all that Stephanie wore one of those sexless jerseys which deprive American seashores of both mystery and delight, Count Inan Inanovich Stoloi felt a leap of self-congratulation within himself.

"Oh!" Stephanie stared anxiously at his cigarette. Then she made a most ineffectual muffler of her hands and half shouted, half whispered, a warning toward him. "You mustn't smoke before breakfast, Inan. Uncle hates the house to smell of tobacco before he has had

his coffee. Come and swim with Mr. Babson and me."

A new dislike of Babson, more violent, even, than that he had experienced the night before, came to Stoloi. Flinging his cigarette away, he spoke in a guttural which might have been construed either as a caress or a snarl.

"Except that it offers a path to Europe," he said, "I have no love for the sea. As for smoking before breakfast, I waited, but breakfast did not come up to me. And so—"

"Haven't you found out yet that in this country breakfast doesn't come to you, but that you go down to it?" Stephanie trumpeted back.

The writing fellow smiled. Truly something had to be done about that writing fellow. But how? Here in a house with dimity curtains and chairs such as the chastest of maiden aunts might find austere? Certainly not. The most effectual part of schooling was atmosphere. Karevina—ah, there was the tutor for Stephanie. After all, women only learn from women. How clever to have brought Karevina into this most desolate of Puritanical countries. What a wise strategy of preparedness. In the scented, exotic luxuries of the house of Karevina, called to by the witch voice of Karevina, how quickly would the woman—the right woman—in Stephanie open her heavy-lidded eyes and look around and smile! The echo of an old familiar thrill ran through Inan Inanovich at thought of that woman.

"My beloved," he said, leaning across the casement, "I shall never accustom myself to the American breakfast. And since the American breakfast will not accustom itself to me, and it is the duty of every good little wife to learn beforehand the tastes of her husband—"

A wave of hot, embarrassed red swam over Stephanie's face, and her eyes flew to Babson. No deaf mute could have appeared more unconscious

than he. She reached her hand toward him impulsively.

"Come on," she laughed uncomfortably, "you and I like the ocean anyway." And ran with him toward the beach.

"Prigs — prudes — Americans," said Inanovich as he dropped into a chair behind the casement and tamped another cigarette on his finger nail. Clearly, the sooner he took the girl to Karevina the better. A double, a triple, an innumerable advantage lay in doing so. Strange he had never noted the round slimness of the child before, the delicate mobility of her face. Perhaps, having been blinded for so long by Karevina—— But Karevina would one day grow old, and a man should look to his future. A bit bizarre, perhaps, to provide for one's happiness in one's wife. But this was the day of grotesqueries. A hot and hateful light came into his eyes as he sat behind the casement and watched the two jerseyed figures on the beach.

The hot and hateful light was still in his eyes when after weathering the cumbersome meal, which in that house was designated by the graceful name of breakfast, he came onto the lawn and shifted a reclining chair into the shade of an awning. Stephanie drew a low stool of woven reeds up beside the chair and sat down.

"Inan," she said breathlessly when he had settled comfortably among the cushions; "Inan," she repeated, and paused. Yes, beyond doubt she was pretty now and gave promise of beauty in which a man might drown himself as in a sea. "Uncle Stephan has promised me to give you a place in his offices."

"What?" The idea was like ice down his back.

She read his breathlessness as she read her own.

"Uncle has promised to give you a place in his offices," she repeated. "He says your knowledge of languages ought

to prove useful. They are buying a new line of ships——"

"You suggested to him that I should go into his offices? I?"

"Why—yes. You see, you didn't seem to have any idea of what you were going to do, yourself, and so I thought——"

"What I was going to do? Have you forgotten, my beloved, that I am to marry you? And do you think that, married to you, I can endure to leave you for work?"

"But that's just it, Inan. It's the one thing I've worried about. I—I don't think you understand American women, Inan. You don't realize that we can't stand having our men around all day. We can't stand it. We want them away at work."

"And the companions you American women choose?" Count Stoloi raised one dark eyebrow questioningly, and anger purpled a little the ruddy color of his face. "You relegate your companions to clammy, dull offices, not thinking of the act as selfishness, as the selfishness for which you, among all the women of the world, are notable?"

"But Inan; it's not selfishness. It's pride! We are proud of the men who go out into the world to fight for us. Just fighting as they do makes them into men to be proud of. And—it's so much—nicer."

"Nice! Your everlasting, new-world niceness! Let me tell you, Stephanie, Continental men have devised means of keeping out of the way of their wives."

"No. I don't mean that." She turned toward the sea, a kind of icy disapproval emanating from her to him. Nice! Count Stoloi ground a repetition of the word between his teeth. That, then, was what he feared in Stephanie! She was being nice now, sitting there like a wooden image. Nice! This house was nice. Stephan Dempster was nice. A nauseating odor of niceness tainted the very air he breathed. It was with

this niceness that he must fight for Uncle Stephan's millions. Well, since he knew his enemy at last the battle could not begin too soon. He would take Stephanie to Karevina at once, before the all-pervading poison of niceness had claimed her entirely for its own.

"Let us go to the city this afternoon," he spoke softly, stooping forward and touching with his lips the eloquently disapproving back of her neck which she presented. She drew away almost before his touch was upon her, and, turning, spoke to him.

"Uncle Stephan expects an answer from you to-day," she said out toward the sea.

"If I am to concede so much to the ways of your world, it should not be, in all fairness, until you have at least seen something of the ways of my world." He spoke again with the guttural which might have been either a caress or a snarl. "You should allow me to present to you some of my friends, since I have been presented to so many of yours. There is one particularly—a woman—the most fascinating woman in Europe, she was lately said to be."

She turned back to him.

"I don't mean to be—inflexible," she apologized. "Of course I want to meet your friends. I want to learn your ways. It's not that I don't want to make concessions, too; it's only that——"

"Good. Then you will come? This afternoon?"

"I will order the car now." And she left him abruptly.

The spring day had grown hot, as spring days are apt to do, when the long gray car carrying Stephanie and Count Stoloi drew up at two bronze gateposts before a small, white marble house set back in one of those miniature forests of cypress trees, which a few fortunate owners in the metropolis

still manage to raise between themselves and the noise and dust of the street.

A giant peasant, his blue blouse belted with a silver girdle from which hung a silver and blue-enamel pistol, responded to their summons at the door, and bowed. Inan said a word in an unknown tongue, and without response the giant opened a door at the left of the wide entrance hall, and stood back.

For a moment Stephanie, blinded by the clear sun of the out-of-doors, saw nothing in the dimness before her. Then gradually the room into which she had come focused amazingly into a picture before her eyes. It was a lofty-ceilinged room, so lofty that there could have been no other apartment between it and the roof of the tiny house. Adding to its appearance of height was a total absence of such furnishings as all the rooms which Stephanie had ever known before contained. There were neither chairs nor tables nor cabinets nor pictures nor lamps. Rugs as deep piled as the pelts of Northern animals lay upon a mosaic floor that gleamed gold and white between their straight-set rectangles of black. Heavy black falls of velvet hung from the ceiling to the floor. Between these falls of velvet, at either end of the room, light filtered faintly through two long panelings of alabaster set in the walls.

For a moment Stephanie was unable to do anything but stare. Then a voice spoke and she turned toward it. It was a fragile voice, as sweet as the piping of a distant flute, and to its accompaniment a wraithlike white figure rose from one of the rugs where it had been reclining.

"Ah, Inan," it said in quaintly accented English, sweetly soft. "It is you, Inan."

"Karevina," Inan spoke huskily and hurriedly, like a man suddenly afraid. "I have brought you Stephanie—of whom I have spoken."

"Yes?" The flutelike voice made an imperative question of the single word.

"Yes." The tone of the bully at once disguised and revealed itself. "I—I find myself in the predicament of all aging lovers, Karevina. Already my fiancée speaks to me of an office. By that you see that already she wearies of me. If I cannot amuse my fiancée, how shall I fare with my wife? I am too vain to think the fault lies merely within me. I think, perhaps, if she understood better the society and people from which her betrothed comes, matters should go better with me. Therefore I have brought her to you, Karevina——"

"Ah!" The white figure floated from the black island of rug where it had risen to the other black island of rug where Stephanie stood.

Stephanie felt the annoying red of youth and embarrassment and undefined fright run up under her skin in protest, tingeing her face so brilliantly that even the dimness of the room was no veil for her protection. Karevina stood studying the child, her bright lips tightened as though to suppress a sound behind them. Stephanie felt her annoyance become defiance, and in boldness altogether now to her she reciprocated the woman's scrutiny. Slender almost to the point of emaciation, and yet indescribably full of grace, was Karevina. Between the satiny curtains of her dark hair two heavy-lidded eyes looked out from a face as pale as death. Dead, the face seemed to be, with the death of a flower that has lost no beauty in death. Only the small, straight mouth was alive, and its life was of the color of a wound.

"Yes." The frail voice gave a sort of fateful finality to the word. "You are, then, still the same Inan." She spoke to the man, but kept her eyes upon the girl. "Yes." And sinking upon the rug at Stephanie's feet, she pulled the girl down beside her. "Be seated, child." Her mind seemed to

come back from some far speculation. "You are probably accustomed to seats other than these my house affords. But here one must be——"

She looked up at Inan again. Her look was a dismissal. The uneasiness her strange acceptance of the situation had given him vanished, and he smiled. Things were going well, then. No veiled threats had been necessary to force Karevina to the tutorship he imposed upon her. After all, she was a woman of sense.

"I shall leave you alone." He bowed ceremoniously. "Adieu, mesdemoiselles."

Karevina listened as the door closed behind him. She heard his word to the porter, and the porter's response. The big car at the curb got under way. The silken pur of its engine died in the distance. Karevina's thin hand tightened upon Stephanie's.

"But here," she resumed as though there had been no interruption to that which she had been about to say, "one must be different. Do you understand, little one, what it means to be always different?"

"No, I don't suppose I do. I have never been different." Stephanie attempted to release her hand, but the other clung to it.

"Pray God, then, that you may never—have to be different!" And as suddenly as she had sunk to the floor, Karevina rose. Her body looked almost tall as she stood above Stephanie and flung out her arms.

"I would that I had so prayed to God while still prayers could avail me. Do you think this travesty of a room, this thing that looks like the dream of some half-mad genius of the stage, is what I want? Come; come with me. Come, let me show you the things my heart really loves, even yet." She began frantically tugging at Stephanie, lifting her to her feet, hurrying her to the door.

"I must go." Stephanie protested. "I must really go."

"Go? Now? Before—before— Go back in all your sweetness and ignorance? No. Listen to me; trust me in this; trust the terrible Karevina. Come and look at the thing she could still have been, if—if— Do not be afraid, my little one, please. I beg you on the knees of my heart, do not be afraid."

Courtesy and the fine old stock behind Stephen Dempster spoke in his namesake, rendering her brave.

"I will come," she said.

The white figure flew ahead of her, passed the porter, up the marble steps, along a corridor that twisted and turned.

"Come," the sweet voice called breathlessly over the shoulder of the flying shape. "Come. Here; we have at last arrived." The shape stopped at a little door of carved and painted oak. Karevina reached to the ledge above the door and took down a great key and set it in a lock of hammered iron that gave back a clanking sound as of a bolt being shot.

"Come." But the hurried, breathless voice was changed. The opening of the door had calmed it.

Stephanie entered the room that opened to her, and again she stood amazed. It was a little room, bright with the splintered light of many shuttered windows. The light fell upon bare and gleaming floors of dark, polished wood, upon a bed, carved and painted like the door through which they had come, upon a table with a basket from which a riot of colored wool spilled, upon chairs and chairs and chairs. A bird hung in a cage of woven rushes, and fluttered a bright flash of wings in welcome. Stephanie saw it all, and her eyes sought Karevina's questioningly.

"Why," she exclaimed, "one would not know it was the same house! And you—even you— One would not know it was you!"

"But yes; here one who knew me would know that it was I. Down there—down in that horror—no. It is another woman who lives there like a ghost. Here I am myself, full of health and cleanliness like yourself. A chair? Will you take a chair? So. And I will take this one. Is it not good to sit, woman to woman, knee to knee, in chairs as God intended? And sitting so, knee to knee, we will gossip, as woman were created to do. We will begin our gossip with a question. You love Inan, *hein?*"

"I think he is the most wonderful man I ever knew."

"You do not, then, know the story of Roberto il Diavolo? And how that after the dance of love with Helena he took the cypress branch that was to give him all that he desired, and transfixed the good Isabella in a magic sleep? You saw not the cypresses at my door as symbols? You did not fear as you crossed the threshold for the magic sleep to fall upon you—the magic sleep of evil?"

Stephanie shot to her feet. The door was locked again, with a heavy bar of beaten iron that crossed it to the casing.

"You will sit down," Karevina said. "Since you may not pass Dmitri at the door until I give a signal, you will compose yourself to listen to the remainder of my old wife's tale. Nor will you look at the lattice of the window. It is of iron. I had it put there, lest I, too, should look for escape when in the night, alone, I retell the tale I now must tell to you. I had it put there, lest I should prove a coward."

Returning to the chair from which she had risen, Stephanie turned a stony little face to her hostess.

"Neither am I a coward. Proceed with what you have to tell."

"Ah, then we are comfortable again, yes?" Karevina reached to the basket on the table and took out two long

needles and a skein of wool. "Yes," she repeated as her fingers took up their task, "I too once thought him wonderful. I too once saw no symbolism in the cypress branch. I was the daughter of an overseer on one of the estates that the czar had given for certain services. Inan used to ride through the park while I stood at the door of my father's house, knitting as I am knitting now, waiting for him to pass. His passing was to me like the passing of a saint in a holy procession."

"If you are telling me the story of the betrayal of an overseer's daughter, you may spare your pains." Stephanie did not blush now. The gentle flag of her girlhood had been struck, and the fighting standard of a woman raised.

"But, yes, I am to tell you the story of the betrayal of an overseer's daughter, and I shall spare myself no pains. Do you know why?"

"Certainly I know why. You are in love with Inan. You have followed him to this country from some place in Europe from which he fled to rid himself of you. You are in love with him, and you do not wish to lose him to me."

"Lose Inan? But I shall not lose Inan, little one. That was understood between us at the beginning. How do you think this house was provided for me, these luxuries procured, if not through money lenders to whom Inan went with guarantees of his betrothal to you and your great wealth?"

"If you think that I would believe that——"

"I do not ask you to believe. I ask you to use only your reason. It will show you that, whereas Inan was poor, impoverished by the war, now he is rich. It will ask you why, and answer you that it is because you have risen like an orb of gold upon his horizon."

"If that is the case, you are foolish to risk the withdrawal of the source of that gold from the contract which has been made."

"No, I am not foolish. For the first time in many years I am being—sublime."

The flush ran unwanted back to Stephanie's cheek. Softness moved along the line of her lips.

"Please," she said rising again, "I want to go."

"If you go now, presently he will come and tell you that I lied. And you will believe him. You will not have escaped the cypress branch."

"But why—why, if you are the woman that you say you are——"

"It is because I am the woman that I am, the woman who lives in this bright, clean room, and not the woman who wafts like a wraith of evil through those shades below, that I am courting now for you—you, whom I scarcely know and ought surely to despise as the silly dupe of myself and another—my destruction."

"But I do not ask you to destroy yourself. I do not want destruction done to any one."

"Nor do I. Grant me the privilege that you accord yourself."

"But——"

"The story of the overseer's daughter is an old story. Since you have read the same story in a thousand books, I shall not weary you with details. I will tell you simply that I went with Inan. I went with him when the czar abdicated. I went with him when he fled from the country that better than he stayed to succor, and to die in succoring. I went with him to Constantinople. But before I came there I knew Inan. He was no longer a saint to me. I had worshiped the saint, I tried to escape the fiend. But Inan loved me. You do not know the love of such a one as Inan, nor will I tell you. Remember, though, that savagery is but a few generations behind him; that the civilization imposed upon him has not yet struck root except along the surface of that savagery. Inan loved me. He did not

choose to lose me. Since it was the good that was in me which took me from him, he killed that rebel good. Do you know how good is murdered? Brutality is too blunt an implement to reach to the hiding place of spirit. It requires cunning, the strange wickednesses of women, to find the hiding, tenacious spirit and pierce it through and through. Inan took me to women, just as he is bringing you to women, just as he is bringing you to me. Wonderful, exotic, brilliant, amusing, flattering women. I listened to them, listened and laughed and lazied among their luxuries, until the drugged needle point of their sins found its way to my soul, and my soul died.

"After that we faced but one difficulty, Inan and I. Daily he became more poor. One by one the jewels he had taken with him in his flight found their way into the hands of the Jews of Constantinople. At last we had barely enough to buy the coffee upon which we subsisted in lieu of food. Inan devised a plan to recoup our fortunes. The war was over. Wealthy people of the world were sending their daughters to school in Switzerland once more. He went to Switzerland. He found you."

She paused a moment, reversed the knitting upon her needles, and started back again, stitch by stitch, across the bright-hued strip.

"Together Inan and I went to a money lender in Zurich. 'At last,' we said, 'we have that which is less exhaustible than jewels to give in pledge. We have an alliance with one of the great fortunes of America.'

"'But there is an uncle,' said the money lender who belongs to the tribe that knows all things. 'He will oppose the marriage.'

"'Having obtained the love and trust of the niece, of what avail is the gray shrewdness of the uncle?' was our response. And being also a student of the love of old men for the young of their houses, the money lender agreed, and the money which we needed came. Inan followed when you returned to America. He made ready a house for me. I followed after Inan. Everything went as we had planned until—until something in you, perhaps, perhaps in your uncle, perhaps in both of you, alarmed Inan. He brought you to me, that I might make you as irrevocably his as the women of Constantinople had made me his."

Stephanie stood up. Karevina laid by her knitting, touched a hidden button on the wall beside her, went to the door before the girl, threw back the iron bar, and held it open.

Without a word Stephanie passed into the corridor, and stumbled along it on the awkward, flying feet of terror. Halfway down the corridor she stopped. Then she came back. Karevina still stood in the open door.

"You——" Stephanie stood an arm's length from her. Her hands went out, and dropped again at her side. Between them was the wall that always has and always will stand between the two great types of women, the wall that cannot be surmounted save by words.

"You," she repeated, "are the best woman I shall ever know in all my life."

She was gone again. The porter bowed as he held the door for her. From the doorway she saw the gray car swinging into the street that led to the tiny house. Behind the cypresses she found a path leading another way, and ran along it.





The Ardent Abductor

By Stuart M. Emery

Author of "At the End of Three Years," "The Perpetual Fiancé," etc.

THE telephone at my bedside buzzed loudly, annoying me. Nobody likes to start the day by being ordered out of the covers by a peevish noise in the apartment. But because there it was shrieking away I trundled over and answered it.

"That you, Milliken?" cried Herbie Hetherington's vivacious voice over the wire.

"It is," rebuked the good Milliken. "What do you mean by getting a man up at nine o'clock?"

"Slug-a-bed!" triumphed Herbie. "Up and about since eight myself. Amazing how odd New York looks early in the morning. Sun up and people going to work and everything. Been trying to get you for the last half hour. Nothing but wrong numbers."

The fellow's tones fairly bubbled with buoyancy. Milliken blinked a bit, holding onto the receiver. It was possible to expect anything from our Herbie, whose fatal weakness for the fairer sex, coupled with a certain irresistible winningness of manner, threatened per-

petually to engulf him. He was, beyond a doubt, the white-haired child whom all women took instinctively to their breast. The little Mormon thrived upon it. It made him bound and beam.

"Last number they gave me turned out to be a bootlegger," caroled on our Herbie. "Tried to sell me a case of something over the phone before I could hang up." Milliken's day opened in amazement. This did not sound at all right. The man must be ill.

"Herbie," I asked anxiously, a segment of brain clearing, "where are you? At the club?"

"No, not club. Public Library."

"Say it again," I cautioned him. "Say it more slowly so Milliken may be sure he heard it right."

"Library, library," insisted the cheery voice. "You know—big place on Fifth Avenue full of books. Got a couple of stone lions in front."

I knew the place and its famous stone lions well. It was there that our Herbie, only a few nights ago, had had a long argument with a policeman who

found him attacking one of the beasts with his wanghee stick. Herbie had just come from a bachelor dinner and insisted that the lion had roared at him. Milliken had acted as his friend and with smooth words saved the situation.

"Want to see you quick," proceeded Herbie. "Slip on a bath robe or something and pop right over. You're only four blocks away. Milliken, good old Milliken, I've got great news!"

Knowing the fellow as I did, there was but one answer to such urgent pleading.

"In twenty minutes Milliken will meet you there. Keep away from the lions in the meantime, Herbie."

"They're all right in the daytime," he chirped. "Put a foot in a shoe and jump for the brass pole."

To the credit of Milliken be it said that he made much speed. Despite a second interruption of the peevish telephone, he found himself, groomed and neatly shaved, approaching the façade of the Public Library well within the appointed time. As I came up through the Avenue crowd I sighted a trim figure and the flash of white spats against the background of the largest pillar. Herbie welcomed me, his bright little face shining with enthusiasm. In his lapel bloomed a fresh gardenia. The man was jauntiness itself. But Milliken was not as yet in a mood to be impressed by anything.

"Why pick out the Public Library for a trysting place?" I inquired, slightly irked. "The Pennsylvania Station is so much larger and airier, and they have a restaurant there. I haven't had my breakfast yet."

"I've had mine," said Herbie, undampened. "Do you good to go without once in a while. Getting a bit plumpish you are, Milliken." With the air of the complete host showing a guest around the premises he led the way to a marble bench in the lobby. At that moment I became aware that the fellow

was loaded down with volumes. The brain commenced to sag under this growing accumulation of mystery.

"Milliken," cried Herbie, "congratulate me! I'm engaged again. She's a girl in a thousand! Marvelous, sparkling, superb! I'm mad about her. Never knew what love was before. When I think of all the girls who've accepted me in the past—the dears—I shudder. Pretty narrow escapes I've had. My gad, but I'm a happy man!"

The little Mormon fairly teemed with glee. His small, spiked mustache quivered joyously. He was, without a doubt, the debonair fellow whose eloquence no woman could resist.

"You're engaged yourself, Milliken. You know what it's like. Never feel normal without a fiancée. Been frightfully unhappy ever since that little girl from Indiana I got engaged to on the steamer went and married the leading green grocer in the home town. Now she's tying up cheese in parcels, or something like that. Can't understand these women. But it's all right now. My gad, but Phyllis Ann is divine!" He fairly beamed.

"Not Phyllis Ann McKee, Herbie!"

"The very angel. Glorious daughter of old Magnus P. McKee. Made his millions in copper mines. Hence the musty literature. Rotten dull stuff. Not a bit of love in 'em."

He turned his books around for me to admire. "Modern Hydraulics," proclaimed the title of one. "The Science of Mining," declared the lettering on the other. The mystery of our Herbie's presence amid the sculptured pillars of the New York Free Public Library was now that much less cloudy.

"Been brushing up on his subject," he exulted. "Want to meet old Magnus on his home grounds. Don't get the man at all. He doesn't seem to like to see me around the house. Sort of growls in his throat, and reaches for something heavy whenever I totter in.

Most dishearteningly old-fashioned sort of parent."

I recalled Magnus P. McKee, a gruff, crag-faced copper baron a good deal about the house when one called on Phyllis Ann. I glanced at Herbie's little spiked mustache, his white spats, and his dapper wanghee stick. Magnus McKee had started life somewhere in Nevada with a pick in his hand and, it had been charged, he still had it there.

"Only thing I can say for him is his daughter. Jove, Milliken, the man doesn't deserve her. Bobbed hair, lips like cherries, just adores adventure stuff. Been giving her a splendid shower of it right along. Whenever I get with a girl the most amazing words emerge from me. Now we're crazy about each other, but we're keeping it dark till I chin a bit with old Magnus. Always sound policy to keep your engagements dark."

Milliken cut into the torrent with a few well-placed words calculated to disturb.

"Phyllis Ann called me up right after you did and invited me there to dinner to-night."

"Of course she did," said Herbie triumphantly. "I told her to. Didn't think it was your bright eyes, did you, Milliken? Not a bit of it. You're going up there to-night and boost Herbie's stock with old Magnus every time my name is mentioned, so as to sort of create a favorable impression with the crusty lad. Not leaving any stones unturned this time. You've got a damnably smooth tongue, Milliken, damnably. Ought to be a pleasure to take it out for a canter for a friend."

Here Milliken bowed, mastering the first shock.

"Then right after the finger bowls you can hop along and I'll bounce in and ask the old boy for his daughter's hand, and all that. No mean idea, what? Phyllis Ann thinks it's great. She won't mind having you around the dinner table

so long as you're working for me." The little intriguer smiled his brightest. "You'll do it for me, Milliken, good old Milliken? You pulled me out of a bad hole over there in Paris. You won't let a pal down now?"

Milliken pondered. Dinner with Phyllis Ann for him already was a total loss as far as the salad course. But Herbie's eyes were two little worlds of appeal. His whole happiness, perhaps, rested on Milliken's answer.

"I shall be there," I pledged him. "I'd better go now and find some breakfast. Can't think up pleasant things to say about anybody before breakfast."

"Oh, you'll find it easy to think up good things about me," encouraged our Herbie. "Just talk loudly and bang your fist on the table whenever you want to put a point over. Always makes people pay attention when the knives and forks jump. You remember to back up everything Phyllis Ann says about my adventures. I didn't lay it on too thick."

I nodded.

"Then that's all right, then. You're my ambassador. I'll meet you at the Egyptian room at the Ten Eyck after it's all over and buy you supper. We'll celebrate. Got to return these tomes to the library now," he added, moving off. "Milliken, you ought to see the girl who takes in the books in the reference room. Eyes like stars!"

He waved a merry farewell, leaving me free at last to answer the call of the inner Milliken.

As the dinner hour approached I found myself alighting in front of a mammoth graystone pile on the Drive above the glistening waters of the Hudson. Magnus P. McKee and his daughter Phyllis Ann lived in a veritable palace, slightly marred by turrets and odd peaks the architect had felt himself at liberty to put on.

A well-fed butler motioned me into

the reception room. There came the sound of tripping feet and in danced Phyllis Ann, her bobbed locks fluttering and her fresh young eyes aglow.

"Oh, Tony, it was so nice of you to come! Has Herbie told you how happy we are? He's the dearest, bravest man in the world! Do tell me all you can about him."

Phyllis Ann made a picture of eagerness. There was no doubt but that she was mad about our Herbie. The lucky fellow had fairly captivated her. At this moment a heavy crunching announced the approach of Magnus P. McKee. He inspected me from under beetling brows, apparently pondering whether or not Milliken had come to steal the doormat. Finally he decided to injure a couple of the guest's fingers in his grip, and we went to dinner, a gay party of three.

Our Herbie's ambassador did not have to wait long before he heard the name of his bright-faced principal being bandied about the table. Old Magnus McKee had an eye for real estate and his graystone fortress was set in a neat bit of greensward of its own, full of clipped shrubbery and bronze deer. With the table set on the veranda and low, shaded lights burning about, we might have been cozily seated at a downtown roof garden. Only here we had a river to look at without its appearing on a cover charge.

"Ho! Ah!" I inquired, cocking an ear. "What's that about Herbie Hetherington? Fine fellow, Herbie. Known him for years."

"Then tell me," cried Phyllis Ann enthusiastically, "do tell me some more about his adventures with you in India."

"In India?" Milliken was slightly put out by this sudden appearance of our elegant, white-spatted Herbie and himself in the guise of intrepid explorers.

"Yes, yes, in India. He was telling me all about it yesterday at tea. He

said he threw his rifle to his shoulder just as the wild beast rushed at him. It was thrilling!"

"It was, indeed," I assured her gravely. Anything our Herbie said was apt to be. "Here was Herbie"—I placed a salt cellar strategically in the open—"and here, where you see this spoon, was the hippopotamus."

"It was a tiger," interrupted Phyllis Ann.

Milliken retreated in confusion.

"Of course, of course. It was a tiger. I'm mixing it a trifle with another shooting expedition Herbie and I took." In that case it had been a rabbit for which Herbie had gunned in a Coney Island gallery and entirely through error had popped an assistant in the corner. "The tiger, roaring with frightful convincingness, leaped——"

"There was Herbie all alone!" cried Phyllis Ann to old Magnus. "Mr. Milliken was standing by paralyzed with fear."

"What's that?" demanded Milliken spiritedly. There are times when the uses of friendship can be carried entirely too far. "Did Herbie tell you that, too, at tea?"

"Of course he did," pouted Phyllis Ann. "But I don't blame you a bit. I'm sure anybody would have been frightened to death." Her tone implied that our Herbie was magnificently immune from all such low sensations as fear. "Don't you think Herbie was wonderful, father?"

The crag-faced parent growled and continued to attack his roast with vigor. It seemed difficult to interest him in our Herbie.

"If that man ever shot a tiger, it was sitting down," he remarked briefly. "Or a sick one asleep in the zoo."

"Mr. Milliken will vouch for Herbie," Phyllis Ann's eyes were full of pride. "You see Herbie saved his life in the rapids of Athabaska last summer. Didn't he, Tony?"

Most vigorously I execrated the little intriguer. The man positively stopped at nothing once he became enmeshed in love. Even now he was doubtless sitting around the club patting his own chest for the tremendous things he had thought up about himself. His enthusiasm would not be greatly dampened by the fact that he was making Milliken out the feeblest sort of fish. But never yet has Milliken gone back on a friend.

"Oh, yes," I said in my best off-hand manner; "Herbie did get me ashore in that little upset. But that only evened things up a bit. I'd pulled him out of a burning cabin a week or so before. Did he say anything about that?"

"No-no," admitted Phyllis Ann.

"It doesn't matter," I said handsomely. "Herbie is really a splendid chap. Brave and faithful hits off his character to an eyelash."

"Who's that red-headed siren he was trotting around Broadway last night?" demanded Magnus P. with tactless abruptness. "She looked like a bad forest fire."

"I'm sure you're mistaken, father," said Phyllis Ann defiantly, tossing her bobbed tresses. "You never saw Herbie with any one last night. He was at the club reading a book."

"Yes," I hastened to add. "At the club, of course. I saw him there myself. He wouldn't play bridge with us. He said he had to study."

"You practiced law once?" inquired Magnus McKee, probing me with a suddenly gimletish eye. Milliken admitted it with a bow. Magnus P. grunted.

"I thought so."

He planted a round, black cigar in his countenance and rose from the table. He was a parent who created the impression that he had had much experience with young men who desired to take his charming daughter away from him.

"The next time that Hetherington

comes into this house you send him to me," he said to Phyllis Ann. He eyed me coldly, previous to moving off. "If I ever need a good alibi I'll know what lawyer to come to."

"O-oh," cried Phyllis Ann, "isn't that wonderful! I can hardly wait for Herbie to get here! Darling Herbie! I know father thinks a lot more of him now. You were splendid, Tony. You said the best things about Herbie. How brave he is!"

It seemed better to let her joyous remarks go.

The whole history of the courtship of Herbie and Phyllis Ann was being recited to me in blissful detail when the butler announced Mr. Hetherington. The time had come for Herbie's ambassador to pack up his portfolio and depart. On the way out I found the little intriguer in the hall, beautifully attired in a braided dinner jacket. The neatest of pearl studs adorned his immaculate shirt front. His wanghee stick draped gracefully on his arm. He looked as though he had just stepped out of the latest advertisement of what the man will wear.

"Herbie," I concluded my remarks, "you've said some great things about yourself in this house. Purely as a friend, I want to see you live up to them."

"Good old Milliken," bubbled Herbie. "Knew you'd back me up. Had to have a witness I could point to, you know. None better than Milliken. Told you she was crazy about adventures, didn't I? Maybe I did make you look sort of crumbly on the edges, but that's just a trifle. Necessities of war and all that. They'll forget about it. Phyl never thought very much of you anyhow."

He gave himself a final brisk patting over and fondled his little mustache.

"Don't forget the Egyptian room at eleven thirty. I'll give you the announcement to take round to the morning

papers. "Magnus P. McKee announces the engagement of his daughter, Miss Phyllis Ann McKee, to Mr. Herbert Hetherington, et cetera.' Might trot along now, Milliken. You've done your bit."

As he moved brightly down the hall I caught a glimpse of the massive figure of Magnus P. McKee standing in the library door, watching him. He looked like a mountain about to fall on something.

The Egyptian room of the Ten Eyck was done in red. There were red wall tapestries, red lights, red tablecloths. One saw red everywhere. One saw redder than ever on being brought the check. At first when I came down the stairs into its crimson-shot twilight I could make out little, but presently the gaze spied our Herbie at a table secluded in a corner. Milliken might have guessed it. The man was not alone. He was looking plaintively into the eyes of a young lady with violent, henna-colored hair, done in a more than permanent wave. The little Mormon failed even to see me until I sat down at the table. His face was twitching with emotion.

"Milliken!" he cried. "He threw me out! My gad, the man threw me out!"

"You don't mean——"

"Old Magnus himself. Been fairly tossed through a door. Quick, Milliken! Meet Miss Daisy O'Shea of the Knickerbocker Manicuring Parlors. Best little cuticle-cutter in the business. She's the only friend I've got in the world. Rushed right to the phone after the fracas and got her. Need consolation the worst way."

"I'll say you do," observed Miss O'Shea composedly. In a thoroughly workmanlike, but none the less refined, manner she drew forth a crayon stick and touched it to her lips. "The little sugar boy is all worked up."

"He called me into the library," got

out Herbie, gnashing at his spiked mustache. "Talked to him in the politest way. Assured the man I madly loved his daughter. Waited for his blessing, sort of proud and happy and shooting the cuffs. Milliken, he made the most fearful sounds! Can't understand the man at all. Vulgarly said he meant to pick something better than a clothes rack for a son-in-law. Barked out that he wanted a two-fisted he-man in the family."

"Herbie," I ventured cautiously. "What did you say to that?"

"Asked him if he meant a pork-and-beans prize fighter with a cauliflower ear. Milliken, he got right up on his legs and shouted at me! Told me to get out of his house and stay out if I wanted to live. I read assault in one eye and battery in the other. So I trotted along. Now Phyllis is all broken up."

The little Mormon rounded upon me. "You're a rotten friend, you are, Milliken. Fell down flat on the job, you did. Left it all to you to make the old boy like me at dinner, and now see what you've done!"

I should not say that any one could blame me for drawing myself up at this statement.

"Herbie," I warned the fellow, "take care. Milliken can be insulted just so far in this affair."

"You're going to be insulted a lot farther before we're through," cried Herbie. "Pulp-head! Who got everything all balled up at dinner and turned my tiger into a silly hippopotamus? Old Magnus had the nerve to tell me I ought to rehearse my company better. I guess I know all about you."

He drew a long breath and his little face brightened.

"We'll let it go for the moment. Got too big a plan on foot to be bothered by anybody's past incompetence. Milliken, I swear I'm going to show old Magnus a thing or two before I'm through.

You and I are just about going to kidnap his daughter!"

"We're going to—what?"

The little intriguer rushed on with glittering eyes.

"It's the only way. I've explained it all to Phyllis Ann and she's wild about it. Greatest idea I've had in months. Going to arrange to have the three of us kidnaped and then I'll rescue her. All faked up in advance, of course, but who's going to know that? I guess when I walk into the house with his daughter after all the police in New York have been looking for her for days, and she tells old Magnus how I pulled her right out of a den of ruffians, he'll lend me his own car to go downtown for the wedding license. Milliken, old man, he'll be mad about me. He'll shut up about clothes racks. Shouldn't wonder if he'd settle a million on us."

"Herbie," urged his friend Milliken, "pinch the old person sharply."

"Oh, I'm awake all right. Thinking pretty keenly, too. It's an inspiration! Came to me like a bolt out of the blue the minute I left old Magnus. Told Phyl and charged straight off to get Daisy. She knows a lot of roughnecks who'll do the trick to perfection. Born and brought up in the gas-house district, weren't you, Daisy?"

Miss O'Shea regarded her exquisitely polished nails with an air of injury.

"Go ahead and put a girl's secret on the radio. So this is what I draw for getting talkative at supper. I guess I've spent the best years of my life trying to live down my past. I'm a lady now, kid."

"Dashed fine lady, too," burst out Herbie, taking in her henna splendor with eager eyes. "No pal like dear little Daisy. Great times we've had together, what? Lot more we'll have yet."

"You said a great deal, darling. You're an elegant spender," remarked Miss O'Shea, paying no attention to

Milliken whatever. "I can't conceive of a nicer gentleman. You won't give a pal the gate after you're married?"

"I guess I won't," exclaimed Herbie fervently. "Not if you help me out on this. Daisy, old girl, who's a good, sound thug to pull this job for us?"

Miss O'Shea wrinkled her brow, but carefully.

"You might try Nifty Dugan," she suggested. "He's got a taxi over on Broadway. We used to dwell on the same block when we were kiddies. He's always wanting me to wed with him."

"Waiter!" shouted our Herbie, brandishing a bill. In less than two minutes he was thrusting us out onto the sidewalk.

"Look here," Milliken was expostulating. "This isn't a motion picture. Mull it over before it gets progressing. I'll just be staggering along back to the club."

"Not a bit of it," whooped our Herbie, shoving me through the door of a cab. "You're in on this up to your fat neck. Got to have somebody to chaperon Phyl and myself while we're under lock and key. Always was a stickler for the conventions. Can't crawl out now after you let me down at dinner. Milliken, I thought you were a friend of mine."

Our Herbie was exalted with the fire of a great idea. There was no talking with the man. In a side street, close to the flashing arcs of Broadway, we parked our cab and wandered afoot to the corner where Miss O'Shea competently directed the search. It only lasted a few minutes. She stretched a finger toward a sinister group lounging in the doorway of a cafeteria.

"Come on out of that, Nifty," she bade. "Leave your boy friends."

Milliken had the impression of a great, dark shape slouching up. He was glad that Broadway was so well lighted and that a policeman in brass buttons stood on the corner. Seen at close

range, Nifty Dugan presented a practically perfect specimen of the Neanderthal man. His forehead was a corrugated, inch-high strip; his great blue jaw jutted forth like a granite promontory. His fists dangled somewhere down around his knees. The cap of a taxi driver was crammed upon his huge skull. It was most obvious that he would overcharge a passenger.

"This the fellow?" queried our Herbie brightly. "Looks the very picture of crime. Might have just strolled out the gates of Sing Sing, what?"

Perhaps it was as well that Nifty Dugan had not heard him. Our Herbie's sleek head came about to his shoulder. He was glaring at his sweetheart, Miss Daisy O'Shea, with whom he used to play at hoops in the gas-house district in the happy long ago.

"Here's a gentleman with a nice job for you," said Miss O'Shea coldly.

Herbie entered the conversation skimmingly.

"What's the price on a bit of kidnapping? Just a friendly affair of a couple of days." He launched into details while the brow of Nifty knitted into a scowl as he followed the blithe arguments of this new patron. "Keep the two of us locked up till the papers are howling about it and then let us out. Then I'll take the lady back home with a big, bold rescue story, and wedding bells will peal." He patted Nifty's arm with his wanghee stick in the friendliest way. "Thought it all up myself. How's that?"

"Sounds like ten years up the river to me," remarked Nifty rudely.

"Come, come, you don't get it at all. Nobody's going to know you did it. Can't very well give you away after I hired you, can I? My gad, it's a golden chance for you to pick up some nice, clean money and you're positively dodging it. Not a risk in the whole thing. All just a splendid joke."

Dugan's small eyes gleamed. Some-

thing approaching thought appeared on his visage. In a mask he might have been a fairly handsome fellow.

"Five hundred bucks," he uttered hoarsely. "In advance. No wooden money either."

"Spoken like a business man." Our Herbie plucked forth his wallet and the fist of Dugan closed on five crisp one-hundred-dollar notes. His optics bulged as he peered at the mass of legal tender yet remaining in the pocketbook. "Always glad to meet a good New Yorker. Middle of Central Park, it is, in the gloaming to-morrow. We'll be there waiting to be kidnaped. Expect you on the dot, Mr. Dugan. Use me any time for a reference if you put this through on schedule."

We dropped the henna beauty at her apartment house, our Herbie most chivalrously seeing her indoors and helping her with her latchkey.

"Milliken," he burst out as he rejoined me, "there's a hundred per cent pal for you! One in a thousand! Helped me out of a mighty big hole to-night. Dear little Daisy O'Shea. Always had the greatest respect for these self-made girls. Came right up out of the alley, she did. D'you note the smile she just gave me? I guess she sort of hated to see me leave."

He went pit-a-pat along the pavement, overflowing with elation.

"Going to bed and dream of Phyllis Ann. I'm delirious about her. Get a good nap, Milliken old man. This time to-morrow night we'll all be kidnaped."

Beneath the tires of Magnus P. McKee's best limousine the driveway of the Park unreeled. Trim and erect at the wheel sat Yato, the tiny Japanese chauffeur, little suspecting what he was about to get into. Within the motor were our Herbie, his Phyllis Ann, and the loyal Milliken. Herbie had donned a faultlessly pressed afternoon suit in which to be kidnaped, and a sprig of lilies of the

valley scented his lapel. The man was fairly wriggling with enthusiasm, tapping his wanghee stick upon the carpeting, and bombarding Phyllis Ann with ardent glances. He burned for action.

"Phyllis," he breathed. "Angel! It won't be long now."

"Oh," cried Phyllis Ann. "It's the most thrilling adventure! I can hardly wait for them to attack us. I'd be so frightened if you weren't here."

Our Herbie pressed her hand, inflating his little lungs. The fellow conveyed the idea that he feared nothing that walked on legs.

"Just around the next corner," he exulted as we bowled along a deserted stretch of woods-girt drive. "Not a cop in sight. They're always off ogling the nursemaids at this time of the evening. Great things, nursemaids, for the morale of the police force. What you got in that brief case, Milliken? Sandwiches?"

"Collars. Clean collars and a fresh shirt. Razor and et cetera."

"Brought a tooth brush along myself, and Phyl's got her vanity case. Guess we can stand confinement pretty happily. We'll only be away a day or so. Just a merry little week-end down in the slums."

As he spoke we rounded the turn and from a byway a huge and battered taxicab leaped forth in our rear. A shout of joy burst from our Herbie.

"Here they come, Milliken. Sit tight, everybody. That Mr. Dugan keeps his appointments to the minute."

Mr. Dugan did. His joggling juggernaut drew alongside of us and Nifty Dugan's paw was thrust forth from the driver's seat, presenting an automatic. Two other automatics in the hands of young men leaning out of the cab were also being poked coldly and professionally at our party. Their bores, to Milliken, looked as large as the Hudson Tube. The thing was being done in style.

"Stick your hands up!" ordered Nifty,

switching his barrel to our chauffeur. Never had Yato brought his employer's motor to a neater, sweeter halt.

"Me stickem," he bleated.

"Now," proceeded Nifty with the speech of one born to command, "you two gents and the lady climb into this bus without stoppin' to pick daisies."

With the gallantest air our Herbie handed the radiant Phyllis Ann into the bandits' car. Milliken followed. The engine of the taxicab coughed and roared as we prepared to depart from there. Yato's Oriental eyes goggled hopelessly.

"Hold them fingers up a while after we've gone," Nifty ordered him, "if you want to keep your health. You get me, Jappy?"

"Me gottem up," wailed Yato. "Me hang onto cloud."

"Tell your master we've been kidnaped," cried Herbie. "Don't forget that. Do it before you wash the car or anything."

Yato bobbed his brown head pathetically. The next moment we were whizzing down the road. Nifty Dugan with the practiced art of the metropolitan taxi driver took all his corners on two wheels. Presently he jerked his head around, indicating the young men who sat opposite our party of three.

"Meet Ashcan Jack and the Yonkers Kid. You're goin' to see more or less of 'em."

Ashcan Jack and the Yonkers Kid visited us with slightly crooked smiles. They were sharp-faced, keen-eyed young roughnecks in natty suits with belted back, and scarf pins were stuck coyly in their shirt fronts. About them was an air of alert efficiency.

"Pull down the blinds and get busy," drifted back from Nifty Dugan. "We're comin' out o' the Park."

And Dugan's aids went about their business promptly. The first thing Milliken knew his wrists and those of our Herbie were wound with rope, and the two men were drawing large black bags

from under their coats. Milliken struggled feebly.

"I say," chirped Herbie, "aren't you fellows doing this up a bit brown? Nothing in the contract about bags and twine. I'm not a department store parcel."

"It's too wonderful for words," trilled Phyllis Ann in raptures. "You're both bound hand and foot."

In a most unwelcome fashion a bag descended over Milliken's head, plunging the world into complete darkness. Only an instant before I had seen Herbie's bright little face disappear from view in similar cloaking folds, his spiked mustache bristling to the last. Something discouraging in hardware pressed against the fifth rib.

"You keep your mouth shut," said a convincing voice. Thereafter conversation languished. Half a dozen or so eternities rolled away. The nose itched and the hands were bound. Milliken was unhappy. The taxicab appeared to be jouncing along on cobbles, and every now and then the rush and clatter of the elevated went by overhead, reminding one that elsewhere life was going along happily and normally with people hanging onto straps in cars and not giving up their seats to ladies. From our Herbie there came at odd intervals merry, gurgling noises.

Finally we stopped and felt ourselves thrust across a pavement and up odorous flights of stairs. The bags were removed from our heads and we found ourselves rubbing our wrists in a badly-lit and generally unpleasant apartment. Dugan stood regarding us with an air of primitive cunning, while the other two shifted their cigarettes from one corner of the mouth to the other, looking not altogether amiable.

"Aha," spoke up our Herbie joyously. "Splendidly done. Might have brought us to a little airier spot, though. Never did like ceilings with the plaster falling off 'em. Frightfully unsanitary. Whole place might do with a bit of wash."

"You quiet down," bade Nifty. "You talk more'n's good for anybody."

Our Herbie frowned upon the man.

"Don't care for that tone at all," he rebuked him. "Expect nothing but civility out of you. I'm paying you quantities of money for this job. You talk as though you were running this kidnaping yourself."

"Listen," glowered Dugan. "Ain't it dawned on you yet this ain't a fake? It's the real article. I know who you are all right. You got money. It ain't every day a couple o' prospects like you and the lady come along yellin' to be held for ransom. We're holdin' you, and holdin' you right, for some pretty big cash."

He thrust forth his vulcanized jaw and grinned in the lowest possible manner. His satellites, smiling crookedly, appeared also to view this entirely new and unexpected situation with humor. An odd thumping began under the vest. "Milliken," husked our Herbie, "there's something wrong with this picture. Been handed a cold plate of soup."

"Think it over a while," advised Nifty. "The windows is five flights up and the boys will be settin' on the stairs whenever they ain't in the room. They got gats and they don't mind pullin' 'em. S'long, mister. I got to take a friend to dinner. I earned it."

The door closed with the unpleasant sound of a key shooting home. The captives were alone.

"Herbie," I said with a good deal of feeling about it, "I'm glad now Milliken brought those clean collars."

The fellow turned on me instantly. Insulted friendship rode his brow.

"Don't want to hear anything more from you. Nice thing you've gotten us into. If it hadn't been for that mutton-headed hippopotamus remark of yours, we wouldn't be here. Never would have had to be any kidnaping. First-class moron, you are."

"I'm not frightened a bit," cried Phyl-

lis Ann. "I couldn't be frightened anywhere with my Herbie. Just think, we'll be together for days and days." She laid a tender hand on his sleeve and our Herbie rebounded on the instant. He forgot about everything but shining eyes that were full of adoration.

"Angel," he breathed. "They shan't touch a hair of your precious head. Herbie says so." Low, adoring sentences commenced to pour from his little mouth. His bright face glowed with love. The two of them might just as well have been alone on a desert island. Milliken went over to the window and looked down on a dingy back courtyard, far, far below. Between us and the ground was nothing but the night air, full of clotheslines and family wash. We were, indeed, submerged in the slums. The prospect did not please.

Eventually the successful young thug known as Ashcan Jack came in, bearing a pink paper.

"Want to see a wuxtree?" he inquired. "All about the big kidnaping."

Herbie snatched the shrieking thing from his hand.

"There's enterprise for you!" he crowed, scanning tremendous headlines. "Haven't been kidnaped three hours and they've got an extra on the street about it. Listen to this. 'Magnate's daughter seized by bandits.' 'Japanese chauffeur tells thrilling story.' 'Herbert Hetherington, wealthy young society man, also a prisoner.' Nothing like New York for snappy journalism. Bet you they have my whole life history in here."

He waved the page about with the most contagious enthusiasm. He looked as happy as a nominee reading the news about his election, or something.

"Anything there about me?" I inquired quite casually.

"Just a sentence or so. Pretty small type away down at the bottom. 'Mulligan, a clubman, is said to have been abducted at the same time.' Smart chaps, these newspaper reporters. Get

hold of the important facts in no time at all. No," he added disappointedly, ruffling through the sheets, "little too early for an editorial on us."

It seemed time to put a bit of a curb on the man's cheer.

"Read us what Magnus P. McKee said about the incident, Herbie. Let us have his trenchant comment without delay."

"Can't," replied Herbie, settling down to a more thorough perusal with Phyllis Ann fluttering at his side. "Paper's got a hole burned in it at that point."

Little cries of pleasure burst from him as he dove deeper into the fascinating narrative. He was still embedded in it when the door opened once more to admit Nifty Dugan. Beside his gigantic shape was a young lady with henna hair.

"I've just dropped in for a social call after dining," smiled Miss Daisy O'Shea archly. "You look as though something must have sort of slipped in the machinery."

"Been a slight setback in the scheme," admitted Herbie, returning her smile with pleased interest. "But it was a splendid idea all the same. Don't know how I came to think up such a good one. Daisy, dear heart," he whispered, "you'll get word to the right people where we are? Greatest little pal I've ever had."

"Me give it away?" said Miss O'Shea composedly. "What do you think I desire? A knife through my corsets? You're the nicest kind of gentleman, but I shall play it most cautiously. A lady's got to look out for herself in this town. I'll provide you with some cigarettes in the morning."

The little Mormon glanced discreetly about. Phyllis Ann had retired to one of the bedrooms of our de luxe weekend apartment.

"Do," he murmured. "I'll count the hours till you come."

"Less o' that stuff, redhead," broke in

Nifty jealously. The henna head was getting entirely too close to our Herbie's sleek one.

Miss O'Shea extended a hand in farewell. Our Herbie pressed it earnestly and long.

"Can it," snarled Nifty. He favored Herbie with subterranean accents. "Better put a new page in that check book o' yours. I'm seein' you on business in the mornin'."

"Not till ten," Herbie informed him brightly. "Never get up before ten. Milliken, good old Milliken, the man has left in a fearful pet! Most disagreeable host I ever saw. Fairly dragged dear little Daisy out of the door with him. I guess I'm the one who knows how to treat her right. Win the affection of a girl like that and you've got something."

I woke from an inferior slumber the next morning, in the bedroom shared by Herbie and myself, to find the little Mormon already up and about. He was reviewing himself in a cracked mirror, evidently pleased with what it reflected.

"Rotten fit, these clean collars of yours," he chided. "Same for the extra shirt you brought along. Feel all lost and lonely in it. This being kidnaped isn't all it might be. Guess I'll be popping out and give Phyl the morning kiss. Always kiss my fiancées the first thing in the morning. Starts the whole day right."

I came upon them engaged in transforming our prison cell into a love nest. Across a scrappish meal, brought in by Ashcan Jack, they cooed their blissful devotion. Long since, apparently, the small affair of their having been abducted had passed out their minds. They merely looked into one another's orbs and reveled. Milliken felt he was invading the sanctity of a honeymoon breakfast. It was some time before Nifty Dugan shambled in and called the meeting to order. He faced a chipper Herbie, whose white spats glistened

bravely amid our secondhand surroundings.

"Listen," was his opening gun. "It's goin' to cost you and the lady five thousand bucks apiece to git out o' here. There ain't any use in squawkin' about it, either. The more you squawk the more you'll pay. I got you by the neck, and I can be a hard guy if I need to."

"Right-ho," chirped our Herbie. "Spoke the truth there, you did. Catch red-hot rivets in your teeth and all that. Can hear the elevated trains fairly being bounced off the rails two blocks away whenever you raise the voice."

A tremendous, knotted fist brandished itself beneath our Herbie's nose. It seemed as though nothing could prevent all the little intriguer's insurance policies from maturing at once. He eyed the knuckled lump, however, with the most casual curiosity.

"Tell it to Milliken," he instructed. "He's my lawyer. Conducts all my affairs for me. Don't want to talk to a man who double-crossed me in a business deal. Don't want to have anything to do with him at all."

Sudden death shifted to under my nose. It was a most unwashed and menacing thing.

"You ain't worth much," growled our abductor. "The papers ain't had hardly a line on you. I'm goin' to turn you loose to carry the glad news to old man McKee. You'll meet us in the Park wit' the ten thousand to-night."

"Ha!" bubbled our Herbie. "That's real brilliance, that is. Nobody like Milliken to bear the tidings. Then, if he doesn't bring the money on the dot, you can cut his ear off. Milliken, good old Milliken, you're elected! It's all up to you!"

Brightly he twisted the ends of his little spiked mustache. As far as our Herbie was concerned the matter was settled. I have never seen his morale better.

"Herbie's right," put in Phyllis Ann,

fastening a glance of admiration upon him. "Father will just love to see you. Tell him we're having the most marvelous time together. It'll be almost a shame to end it."

The mutterings of Milliken ran into feebleness at about the moment Miss Daisy O'Shea entered on her morning visit to the interned. She wore a skirt that suffered daintily from shortage of material and her eyelashes were newly beaded. The henna hair was more violent than ever. Even the eyes of Dugan expanded at the stunning effect of her arrival.

"Your little pal's come back to see you, Herbie," she greeted him gayly.

The countenance of our Herbie warmed with strange fire. His little fingers twitched.

"Milliken," he pleaded in low, throbbing tones that caught my ears alone, "go over to the window there and talk to Phyl a minute. Be a friend to her. My gad, but red hair is wonderful!"

Magnus P. McKee fairly glowered. The crag-faced parent looked, not only able but anxious to bite notches in a steel girder. The entire McKee mansion hummed with activity. Telephones rang in a steady barrage. One stepped on the feet of plain-clothes men and private detectives all over the hall. Through this levee of Holmeses and Hawkshaws strode Milliken, quite his own man again. Only a comparatively few minutes previously the familiar bag had been removed from the head and I had been thrust forth from a taxi in the Park to make my way afoot to Phyllis Ann's home. Out in the twilight at a certain spot Nifty Dugan waited for ten thousand ducats to be placed in his palm.

I touched Magnus P. on the elbow, diverting his attention from a gentleman with a heavy mustache and a clew.

"Might I have a word in private with you, sir?"

He snorted horribly.

"It's that damned Milliken. I don't want to see your face in public or private. Parkins, show this man the door."

I stiffened with proper dignity.

"Although no one as yet appears aware of it, that damned Milliken was kidnapped along with your daughter and Mr. Hetherington. I have just come from their place of confinement with full details."

Magnus P. snatched me into his library. Long before I was through he was pounding upon a carved desk with his fist and a number of broken objects d'art that had fallen off things lay about the room. Here was a man who loved his daughter.

"Cooped up with that smirking clothes rack in the slums? I knew I'd made a mistake not slamming the door in his face the first time he showed up at this house. The little tailor's dummy!"

It was to be gathered from his remarks that our Herbie's stock in the matter of Phyllis Ann was not on a rising market. Magnus McKee strode up and down the carpet, proceeding with great vigor:

"Pay five thousand dollars for my daughter's release? I'd pay ten times that to any man who'll bring her here to me safe and sound to-night. The money's right in that safe. I've been expecting something like this. But not a buffalo nickel to let that little total loss out!"

"It's just until to-morrow," I reminded him. "Mr. Hetherington will repay you as soon as he can reach his bank. He has conducted himself with characteristic fortitude throughout this affair."

A series of minor explosions erupted from Magnus P.

"You're a good lawyer and a good liar. The proposition's absurd. I'll put up no five thousand dollars to a gang of thugs to let that Hetherington thing loose so he can come slinking around here again. I'll give 'em ten thousand

if they'll take him off somewhere and drown him. You go back to 'em and tell 'em that! Tell it to them where he can hear it, too!"

Magnus McKee strode to a safe in the wall and jerked its combination about. I thought for some moments the whole handle would come off. When he returned his hands were full of packages of bank notes.

"Here's your money. If my daughter isn't back home inside of two hours, the police force will burn down New York City to find her. I've had one inspector fired already for not locating her. I'll live up to the agreement you made with your crooks. You won't be followed when you meet 'em. But you tell 'em to throw that Hetherington parasite into the river with my compliments."

The crag-faced parent had slipped the veneer of his millions and had become once more the complete Nevada miner. He towered. He flung his arms about. In his eyes flamed a mighty rage. He was making so splendid a disturbance that the sound of commotion in the hall outside was completely lost upon him. There came running feet and shouts of surprise. The door opened.

"Ah, Milliken," observed our Herbie, strolling jauntily in with the radiant Phyllis Ann on one arm and his wanghee stick on the other. "Busy with the old negotiations, I see. Might pay off our taxi outside with some of that filthy lucre you're flourishing."

"Herbie!" I broke forth from stupor. "Herbie! What's happened?"

The fellow cocked his eye brightly at us.

"We've escaped," he offered nonchalantly. "Sort of grew tired of the spot, so we came along home. It seemed the thing to do."

"Father!" cried Phyllis Ann, flinging herself into the parental arms. "It was thrilling! Herbie was marvelous!"

"Nothing to it at all," modestly disclaimed our Herbie. "Two chaps guard-

ing us took to shooting dice to pass the odd time right after Milliken left. Found a fifty-dollar bill I never knew I had in a vest pocket and tossed it on the floor. Told 'em to go ahead and roll for it. Fellows bent over the dice with the greatest enthusiasm, emitting cries and whistles. So I just picked up an iron bucket from a corner and dropped it on the head of the chap called Ashcan Jack and he popped off to sleep. Kicked the other fellow most violently on the shins and he fell down the stairs. Nothing more to do but walk out and find a taxi. Going to pay that cab off for us, Milliken, or not?"

"Herbie was so brave," rippled Phyllis Ann. "He just shouted out: 'Hang onto me, I'm leaving!' There were things falling all over. Father, he's a hero!"

Our Herbie flicked a drop of his victim's blood, or something, off his cuff. He had, the gesture proclaimed, killed his man and would rest well that night.

"Do the same for any girl in a tight corner," he remarked. "Been in lots more dangerous places."

There came a silence. It was broken by the strange, strangling sound of Magnus P. McKee revising his estimate of a fellow man and having it go hard with him. His sphinxlike face was breaking into a smile. Honest emotion threaded his voice as he gripped Herbie by the hand. Our Herbie winced with pain.

"Young man," rumbled Magnus P, "I've said a lot of hard things about you in the past. I take them all back. You've proved yourself a two-fisted fighting man. You've rescued my daughter. You want her. She's yours. I'll be proud to have you in the family."

Our Herbie's little jaw dropped in the most amazed manner. Magnus McKee himself had him firmly by one hand and Phyllis Ann gave every indication of being about to nestle publicly upon his breast. His eye found mine with a ter-

rible, strange emotion in it. I looked to see him pounce upon his beloved.

"Phyllis," he got out, "your hair. Frightfully mussed. Don't like it."

With a charming flutter Phyllis Ann reached the door.

"I'll be right back. I'll fix it for my darling," she trilled and was gone.

"You'll get out of that foolish bond business you're in." Magnus P. McKee was shouldering imperiously into the rosy future. "I'll find a place for you right with me in my office. You've got the stuff in you, young man. I'll work you twelve hours a day and make a copper man out of you in six months. You start Monday."

For a moment I feared that our Herbie was about to collapse. Crunching heavily, Magnus McKee arrived at the door where he turned.

"Phyllis ought to be here any minute," he said in a jocular, fatherly way. "You don't want to see me again for a while."

"No," mourned Herbie, "I don't."

Milliken advanced, with outstretched hand, upon a strangely broken lover. The man's sudden happiness had been too much for him.

"Herbie," I cried, "the heartiest congratulations! You've got her at last!"

His little spiked mustache drooped horribly. He clutched at me with a frantic grasp.

"Yes," he husked. "I've got her. But Milliken, good old Milliken, I don't want her! Oddest thing has happened. Don't seem to love her any more. I guess a fuse blew out or something. Milliken, I'm mad about Daisy O'Shea! Felt it coming on for days. She's a girl in a thousand! She's wild about me. What hair that girl has! Went to my brain like a living flame the minute she walked in on us this morning. Made a date with her for to-night while you and Phyl were talking. That's why I broke out of that place and dragged Phyl along with me. Couldn't stay locked up another hour. My heavens, what's that?"

The sound of light, girlish footsteps neared the door.

"Milliken," cried our Herbie, "that Phyllis Ann woman is coming back! D'you hear what her brute of a father said he'd do to me? He's going to work me twelve hours a day. My gad, I'm skipping through this window while there's still time."

But the little Mormon spoke too late. Freshly-gowned and eager Phyllis Ann had danced into the room and flung herself upon his breast.

"M-Milliken," gurgled Herbie, "t-tell that taxi of mine to wait. I'll be right out."

Our Herbie had come dashing into my apartment, panting with high haste. He had fairly hauled Milliken into the elevator and out the street door. About us now twinkled the lights of Broadway, irradiating the bright face of the fellow who kept urging us to a terrific pace, regardless of the feelings or feet of the crowd.

"Herbie," I demanded as we slowed down an instant for a river of traffic, "where are we going? Are you fleeing the country?"

"Thought I might have to, but I don't," he exulted, speaking the first lucid words I had heard from him in forty-eight hours. "I've just come from dinner with old Magnus and Phyl. Delightful girl that, Milliken. Never will cherish anything but the most affectionate memories of her."

"And she," prompted Milliken, "never will forget the time in India when you shot——"

"Pulp-head!" snapped our Herbie. "Fine one-track mind you have. Can't seem to get a harmless little yarn out of it. Had a real explorer up there for soup to-night. Ever hear of A. Byron Evans? Been rummaging about Africa for the last two years. Milliken, you should have seen Phyl's eyes open when

I poked him into talking about his adventures! That man's shot bigger things than tigers. He's shot ten-foot pachyderms, as he calls 'em. I just sat tight, putting in the right word now and then to keep the fellow from lagging. He got all wound up and went on for hours. Pat me on the back, Milliken! By the time I got through stirring him up that Phyllis woman was hanging onto every word that fell from his lips. My stuff looked like milk for the children beside his. When he told about standing off a whole herd of elephants with only one cartridge left in his revolver I knew he had her. I sort of slipped out the door and she never even knew I'd gone. Passed old Magnus in the hall with a cheery good-by, going fast. Think he's pretty proud of me yet."

"Ah, yes," I observed. "Be sure to punch the clock when you arrive at his office Monday. Punch it about eight thirty and he'll be prouder still."

"Not going to punch it at all," proclaimed Herbie. "Going to call him up Monday and tell him I'm taking the day off. Going to take the day off Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, too. Going to keep on taking the day off until he fires me. I guess that's the way to fix his little proposition."

He guided me around a corner, halting us in front of an apartment house that seemed subtly familiar.

"In we go, Milliken. All on fire with yearning for dear little Daisy. No short-haired fiancée tied around my neck this time. Told you, didn't I, she's mad about me? Love and affection are what that girl wants, and I'm going to give 'em to her. I know how to make her happy. My gad, I could kill that thug Dugan for the way he treated her. No wonder she hates the sight of him."

Before a door we paused.

"It's open," he whispered ecstatically. "We'll walk right in and surprise her. She'll be crazy with delight when she

sees me. She loves surprises. You just watch the reception I get."

Setting his hat on the side of his head, our Herbie entered Miss O'Shea's apartment. It was empty, but from the rear somewhere came the murmur of voices. With a finger to his lips the little Mormon led the way. We looked into a small but compact kitchen.

Nifty Dugan, the gas-house district lover and late abductor, sat at the table gorging himself upon food. About him hovered Miss Daisy O'Shea, a spotless apron at her waist and a large black-and-blue mark beneath one eye.

"Darling," she was inquiring, "do you like your steak?"

Nifty balanced a rare morsel on his knife, previous to devouring it.

"What you make it out of?" he demanded. "An old shoe? You told me you could cook."

It seemed that the uninjured eye of Miss O'Shea was about to weep.

"Nifty, you d-don't love me any more."

"Who says I don't? I knocked you down and gave you a free ride to the City Hall and married you this mornin', didn't I? What more do you want in one day? You redheads make me tired."

Milliken became aware that he was being conducted out of the apartment by a hand that clutched horribly at his wrist.

"He hit her," moaned our Herbie, a crumpled ruin. "He hit her and she loved him for it. She's gone back to the gas-house forever. Milliken, good old Milliken, I'm through with women. They're problems without any answer in the back of the book."

He stopped the first taxicab and piled us in.

"To the river," he uttered brokenly. "Don't stop on the way." For blocks we jounced and rattled, and then began to roll down the polished smoothness of the Avenue. Our Herbie said nothing.

He remained huddled in his corner, shivering now and then as though already he could feel the waters creeping up about him. Through the night there loomed up the shape of a vast and pillared building, on each side of whose steps stone lions mounted guard. It was the Public Library from which we had set forth so gayly on this adventure.

"Herbie," I comforted the wreck at my side, "there's always a silver lining to these things, if you'll only shop around

for it. You'll never have to take out another volume on scientific mining."

He was on his feet. He was rattling his wanghee stick on the glass behind the driver. He was shouting to him a new address—that of the biggest, brightest, and most expensive roof garden in the city.

"Milliken, good old Milliken," he was crying, "there's a girl that takes in books in the reference room over there who——"



COMPENSATION

WHEN I lived in Kansas an æon ago
 And rode o'er the plains on my fiery morropus—
 A species of ungulate, clawed as to toe—
 It's true I was only a Pithecanthropus,
 Who knew not the meaning of art or of opus:
 But also the truth, if I stick to the facts, is
 I knew nothing, either, of rent or of taxes.

My life, I admit, was a trifle bizarre,
 My household arrangements a little erratic.
 I hadn't a radio, furnace, or car;
 I didn't know Maeterlinck, Ibsen, or batik;
 But still—and I cannot be over-emphatic—
 I didn't know, either, the Philippine question;
 I had no garage bill, and no indignation.

My outlook was painfully queer and abnormal;
 My clothing was only an improvisation;
 My meals were elusive and very informal;
 Of law I had never a realization.
 But, shucks! When I look upon civilization
 I wish I were back on a pre-glacial basis,
 A-riding morropi in primeval places.

JESSIE HENDERSON.

A CAFÉ IN CAIRO

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Barry Braxton, attaché at the American embassy in Constantinople, was sent to Cairo to deliver to Lord Raversham, British commissioner, important secret dispatches. While waiting for Raversham Barry went, on a tip from Henri Mantzon, whom he had met in Constantinople, to the café of Zaradi in the Street of the Pomegranates. There he met and fell in love with Naida, a dancing girl of unusual beauty and brilliant mind, a protégée of Zaradi.

On his return to his hotel he found an invitation from the Countess Tavarin to escort her to the Café l'Orient. There he met Lady Edenham, Raversham's sister, and also a party of old friends from the States; Tom Hays, his wife Peggie, and his sister Rosamond. They treated him with marked coldness, and he discovered that they had seen Naida in his suite at the hotel, and misunderstood the situation.

On returning to his rooms, however, Barry found that Naida had indeed been there. She had left a note to tell him that Zaradi was sending her down the river to the House of Stars and temporary confinement until the talk about the dead monk, who had been found murdered in the garden of Zaradi's café, had blown over.

That afternoon Barry went with Rosamond and her party to a tea given by Madame Marigny on the house boat of André Fromelin, French representative in Cairo. There he met Caselli, the unfrocked priest, Naida's teacher, who warned him that, if he attempted to see Naida at the House of Stars, he would probably never return alive. But Barry's resolve remained unshaken.

That evening he recovered the dispatches for Lord Raversham from the hotel safe where he had deposited them before going to the house boat, and took them with him to the reception Lady Edenham was giving for her brother. He delivered them to the British commissioner with a feeling of tremendous relief that now he was free to follow Naida, only to discover when the packet was opened that it contained blank paper. Some one had lifted the seals, removed the dispatches, and resealed the envelope. He remembered Naida's visit to his rooms. Well, now at least he was unhampered by any illusions about her. Determining to wring from her the destination of the stolen papers, Barry went, as arranged, to the House of Stars, bearing in mind a hint given him by Caselli that an old reservoir, dry at this time of year, might furnish a convenient means of retreat from the ancient, fortified palace. He gained admittance to the building unobserved, but in searching through the rooms he encountered a tall, black-skinned Kabyle, who, recognizing the presence of a stranger, attacked him.

Barry, felled by a knife thrust, regained consciousness to find himself being tended by Batooka and Naida. Maddened by his doubt of her, Barry accused Naida of stealing the dispatches. She acknowledged that she had done so, to prevent their being stolen for Zaradi. Meanwhile Zélie told Zaradi that she had arranged for the boy Sadek to steal the Drake letter from Raversham. Kali, learning from the Agha of Barry's presence at the House of Stars, set out, intent on putting Barry out of the way and obtaining possession of Naida.

That same evening Countess Tavarin returned from a trip into the desert, bringing with her a safe conduct for Barry Braxton, issued by the Said himself. On presenting herself to Lady Edenham, she learned to her horror that an attempt had been made on Raversham's life. He was unconscious, but still living.

Fearing for Barry's safety, the countess, with Tom Hays and Mantzon, went direct to Zaradi to demand Barry's safe return. Zaradi promised to trace him.

Meanwhile, in the House of Stars, Naida watched over her lover.



A Café in Cairo



By Izola Forrester

Author of "The White Moth,"
"The Temperamental Zone," etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

BATOOKA sat fanning the unconscious American, her sloe-black eyes alert and watchful, her crumpled mouth mumbling to herself softly. He lay on an improvised bed of cushions and silken rugs placed over a pallet of soft wool, not in the outer apartment of the harem, but in a narrow, inclosed room where they had carried him for concealment. There were no windows in the side walls. The roof itself was a mosaic of colored glass. The walls were of heavy gold fresco, lightened with panels of exquisite carven wood, and hung with the rarest of prayer rugs. At one end was a niche in which burned a faintly flickering light in a bronze lamp facing Mecca. It was the secret praying place of the Mameluke harem women.

She had told Naida of the Agha's escape, pleading with her to get rid of the American before either Zaradi or Kali could arrive. Ibn M'zab would go to them and betray Barry's presence in the House of Stars.

"Even so," Naida had said scornfully, "they would not dare to kill him. Zaradi is wise. You do not know, Batooka, you most precious old baboon—how should you know—that the life of my beloved is above all price. If any harm came to him in this place, Islam would answer to his country and to England, too."

"They will kill you," Batooka retorted

obstinately. "What is the life of one man to that of my golden lily, my rose-hearted lotus bud?"

Naida knelt beside the prostrate, silent form, lifted his hand to her cheek, and sighed.

"His life is my life, Batooka. Have you never loved a man?"

"Many." The strong old shoulders shrugged meaningly. "Each worse than the last. Now I sleep well and have time to pray. What is that sound?"

Both listened intently. From the courtyard far below there came the heavy grumbling of a disturbed camel; a faint tolling of a far-off bell; the flutter of waterfowl in the river out of sight. Batooka shook her head enjoining silence and laid aside her fan. She lifted a rug and pulled at an iron ring in the floor until a round section lifted and they descended a circular stair that led down from the tower at one corner of the women's quarters. Naida followed cautiously until they stood on the flowery balcony overlooking the inclosed garden. Here again they waited, listening.

"Aya, aya," Batooka grinned, nodding her head. "So they come. Sleep fast, humming bird; close thine eyes of beauty and know nothing." She gave her mistress a push toward the couch of the inner room, and took her own time going to the barred door. Cursing bountifully the ancestors and future descendants to the tenth generation of

whomever dared disturb the sweet dreaming of her golden lily, she demanded to know who was there. Kali's own tone, guttural, brief, answered harshly, demanding admittance.

"Pig of the desert, why must I open my master's treasure casket to such as thou?" Batooka answered loudly. "Zaradi is not with you." She listened for the answer, her face keen with cunning.

"I seek the thief who plunders by night. Open in the name of Allah!" Kali struck the high cedar doors heavily. They resounded with the blows, but barely trembled under them. Back among the velvet and silken cushions of her couch, Naida sat up, tense and restless. She had searched for weapons in case they could not hold the doors against attack, and on the low inlaid table beside her lay two daggers with curved blades, curious characters engraved on them, hilts of silver set in rubies and turquoise, toys against the strength of men like Kali and the Agha.

The blows became heavier now. They were using a stool to batter with. She sprang down from the low platform, and thrust her feet into slippers, holding her overrobe of heavy satin close around her. Batooka was chuckling at the impotence of the attack, but was silent as the girl appeared. She made herself heard above the clamor.

"Kali! You hear me—Naida. What is the meaning of this outraging of all honor? Why do you dare to come here at this hour and arouse the whole palace?"

"I seek the beloved owl that has fluttered blindly to die in the House of Stars." Kali's voice came to her, conveying to her full import of his insinuation. He used the same words she herself had used in her brief note to Barry. He knew, then, that she had visited the rooms of the American at his hotel. Kali, Zaradi's tool, yet variable in loyalty and treacherous as a half-tamed

desert panther, Bedouin in blood and training even while he swaggered with the acquired aplomb of the Cairo Arab. She knew there lay more behind his coming there than mere desire to serve Zaradi.

"Owls do not pass latticed windows," she returned clearly. "Dogs and wolves paw at doors. I am under the protection of Achmed Zaradi, and warn you of his retaliation for this."

"I am here under Zaradi's own orders," Kali told her boldly. "He has been informed of your love for this man, of your going to him by night, your protection of him." She flattened herself against the heavy, barred door, her hands outspread, her eyes closed as she heard him with a smile of triumph. "The Agha came to warn us of his presence here to-night. You will open these doors or I'll bring the whole accursed palace down about the ears of you and your lover."

"The walls are strong," Naida answered. "The Turkish cunning and might could not penetrate to so much as the secret playground of the Mameluke women upon our terraces. Tell Zaradi for me to come himself with future orders. Bruise not your knuckles against the pitiless doors, Kali. I am going back to sleep."

"And I will wait here on the threshold until the black hour comes to you and the man you hide in there," Kali hurled back beneath set teeth. The Agha, watching him with nervous, shifting gaze and folded arms, glided forward now, and caught at his arm as he stepped back from the high arched doors. He whispered in Kali's ear eagerly. There was another way into the harem if a man had courage. He himself would never dare to venture, but by a man of high courage it could be done.

Kali listened to him intently, watched him when they retired to the next room and the Agha dipped his finger in the wine dregs of a goblet and drew a map

upon the surface of the olive-wood table. Beneath the underground foundations of the palace lay all manner of secret chambers and outlets. Part of these had been the water system of the original plan: sluice gates and conduits to let in the Nile when it rose, wells to provide for the dry season; and the great center cistern, a novelty to Egypt but common enough in the Caucasus.

A man who was brave, and had a purpose great enough to carry him on, might make his way through to the Well of Swords in the terraced garden of the harem. Kali's eyes narrowed as he listened, weighing the hazard.

"It is old and choked with drifting leaves from the upper garden. Bind fast upon the soles of thy feet pieces of wood. The blades are rusty and dull. I will wrap thy most priceless hands in goat hide so thou canst grasp with them. At the foot of the well the stonework widens out. There is an outlet here where the sliced fragments used to be collected and taken out——"

"Thou shalt go thyself," Kali pronounced. "Climb up and open wide the doors to me. Why should I do this thing when I have such a dog as thou to go instead?"

He prodded the protesting Agha forward with the point of his knife, Ibn M'zab swearing he was too fat to climb the well; there was no space between the blades to let him by, whereas his sublime master Kali was tall and slim as the young lion, resistless as the serpent of the secret rocks. He ended in a grunt of pain, dodging ahead of the stalking form behind him, leading the way down the passageway Barry had entered from the lower courtyard.

Against the inner side of the doors Naida leaned, listening. No sound came, no threatening voice, and still she felt a sickening dread, knowing Kali's methods.

Batooka waddled back to her vigil beside the sleeping American. Stoically

she sat and fanned him while Naida moved restlessly about in the sumptuous rooms below, slender and evasive as a shadow in the half light from the long, swinging lamps. Not for one instant was she deceived as to the real purpose of Kali's coming there. It was not to recover the Drake document for Zaradi. He had learned of her visit to Barry's rooms, and had followed him to the House of Stars with one idea of vengeance on the man who had robbed him of her love.

Always, ever since she could remember, there had been the menace of Kali in her life. As a little girl, cherished by Batooka apart from other children in the Arab village at Daid-el-Marar, conscious always that she was, in some mysterious way, unlike them, it had been the visits of Kali that had given her the first fear of her life. His black, narrow eyes that followed her with unblinking fixity, with the somber absorption of some lurking, preying wild animal biding its moment. His hand on her head as she passed him by, rumpling her curls with a touch of fierce tenderness over her eyes—it had filled her always with a vague dread of him.

When the time had come for her to go to Cairo Kali had brought the summons from Zaradi, had conducted Batooka and herself in his own caravan with all the care and attention he would have given to a bride elect, bound to her bridal. It had amused her to see Batooka's contempt of him, yet in the days of her dwelling in the house of Zaradi always she had been keenly conscious of Kali's claim over her.

"The bargaining of men is foolery," Batooka told her many times with a serenity that calmed her. "Zaradi is a good man. He will use such a one as Kali for his ends, but will he give him what he demands when it is the pearl of all women? Do you think that all this labor of years is being bestowed upon you, my beautiful jewel, for you to shine

in the front of Kali's turban? You are safe with Zaradi."

She drew in her breath now with a heavy sigh, turned from the night warmth of the inner rooms, and stepped down from the balcony to the garden. Three terraces rose from the center court where the fountain played in the full moonlight. All the artistry and camouflage of skilled Oriental craftsmen had been employed to make this secret place of the beloved women a marvel of satisfying loveliness. All through her girlhood she had enjoyed its seclusion and charm of sequestered quietude. To-night it seemed unreal. The moon hung heavy in the cobalt sky, honey colored, slow moving as an unwilling woman slipping away from a midnight tryst and ever looking backward.

She paced back and forth along the narrow, flagged walks, her arms clasped back of her head, her hair clustering about her uplifted face. The branches of the orange trees and rosebushes caught at her filmy draperies as she passed, like reaching fingers seeking some hidden virtue from the mere touch of her. At one end of the upper terrace the tower of prayer rose slenderly against the sky. It seemed like the very pivot of all dreams to her when she paused to look at it. A different look had come to her face and eyes since she had heard the call of Kali outside her doors. She had no fear of him; rather she felt it a duel of wits, a playing for high stakes: love and the life of the man she cared for most on earth.

Over and over she hesitated, poised, listening, thinking that she heard something, a movement in the vines that clambered heavily over the high walls along the outer border of the terrace, a footfall in the inner rooms beyond her, a call through the night that was neither bird nor animal. Released again from dread, she would walk on. At least he should not find her sleeping but on

guard. She walked the length of the terrace and back again, her mind delving restlessly into one mode of escape after another for Barry. Could she in some way reach out to Zaradi, and put faith in his protection. Where Kali held to the motive of personal satisfaction in jealousy over Barry, to the Egyptian there would reign paramount the ultimate issue, the answering to the foreign group for the death of Barry Braxton. Sent to Cairo as direct emissary from Drake himself to Raversham, the responsibility for his safety would be one which Zaradi could not shirk.

There came the peculiar hush before dawn, a lowering of the moon into the strange luminous darkness of the desert beyond the river, tremulous calls of stirring waterfowl below the palace wall. Naida saw suddenly the flicker of yellow light from the swinging bronze lantern Batooka carried, coming down the circular stair from the prayer tower. She hurried to meet her, with the flare of fear in her whole being.

"Aya, do not speak so; he is awake and better," Batooka scolded. "He calls your name. Go to him now, and I will watch for the brown pig Kali. Wait, wait," she cautioned seeing the girl's pale, tense face. "The night has wrung your heart and laid its gray hand over your sweet eyes. You must bloom fair for love's delight, my dawn blossom. The Nile lilies open slowly when the day breaks, petal by petal. Wait for me."

Reluctantly Naida stood while the old woman dragged from wall recesses silken and velvet gowns, yards of veiling, caskets of jewels, and poured them out on the rug at her feet. Kneeling, she decked her out like a chosen favorite, swathing her slim, exquisite body in rarest gold and rose tissue, layer upon layer, brushing the heavy masses of her curls until they gleamed in the half light, touching up the dark eyes until their sadness seemed to blend into mystery.

"No more," Naida pushed away the long necklaces the old woman would have let fall over her head. "I hate those things." She hurried to the foot of the stair and reached for a half-opening rose, heavy with its own effort at unfolding. Over the eastern wall of the palace a pale flush lessened the darkness. The dawn wind rose from off the Mokkatam Hills like some sentient being winged for far flight. It blew low over the terraces, stirring everything into response. Naida hesitated, her face uplifted in an ecstasy of relief. He had wakened to ask for her. He would listen to her now, and understand. Her eyelids closed softly, lifted again to look back at the gardens, and she stopped short, staring down at the Well of Swords.

It was covered by a grating, hooped many times in welded iron, overgrown with flowering vines. Yet as she looked the grating lifted slowly, resisted the pressure from below, lifted again, this time higher.

Batooka, too, had seen it and seized the bronze lamp she had been carrying to rush forward when the girl's voice checked her. She stepped down from the tower stair as Kali's head emerged out of the well.

CHAPTER XVIII.

As he drew himself up from the well Naida watched him in fascinated horror. Lean, powerful, and relentless, he leaped from the clinging mass of vines about the upper iron rim and stood erect, outlined against the dawning light in the East. He was without the long swathing burnoose he wore habitually, and had cast aside his turban for the tortuous route through the underground conduit leading to the well. The sword blades, which lined in cross sections the interior, rusty and blunted by years, had still grazed the bare, sinewy flesh of his shoulders and back.

He stretched his arms wide, inhaling deep satisfying breaths of the cool air after the stifling confinement of the unused secret passages. Even the crisply oiled ripples of his black hair were grayed by cobweb meshes where he had crawled low through bat-infested cellars. Discovering her, he smiled slowly; even, white teeth gleamed in the semidarkness.

"Come here," he said, the edge of menace in his quiet tone. "You look like a desert woman decked to receive the golden caravans. I interrupt."

"It is the hour of prayer." Looking back into his brilliant, deep-set eyes, she felt a curious calm possess her, a surety of resourcefulness. "You do not kneel, Kali? Come with me to the women's tower and say your prayers."

His gaze shifted before the challenge, strayed with uneasy suspicion to the narrow, circular stairs, and back to her amused, contemptuous face. The creeping figure of the old woman caught his eye as she crawled along the black-and-white marble floor to gain the sleeping room. Naida uttered a protesting cry as he gripped her, dragging her under the light of the hanging lamp. Twisting her shriveled wrists, he demanded from her the truth concerning Barry, and Batooka howled back at him like an enraged baboon. Son of ten thousand desert dogs, accursed thief of Allah's sheep pens, she prayed for the death of a goat to him in the black hour that waited. Her voice ended in a shrill scream, and she crumpled at his feet whimpering.

"End it quickly," Naida said defiantly. "Kali, who fights old women, should be swift with the final thrust."

He kicked the shapeless form out of his way, and strode to the foot of the stairs. On the dark olive of his skin there glistened moisture. As he stared up at her the veins of his throat thickened darkly.

"Am I a fool to lie to? I do not care

now where you have hidden your Christian lover. All the better if he hears and sees me, for I am here to stay."

"But why be tragic and ferocious?" she taunted back. "Even an unbidden guest is under certain laws of hospitality. Since it has interested you to crawl like a lizard from the well, why not satisfy yourself completely? Look, look wherever you like. I invite you to search." She made a gesture of complete dismissal of all opposition, and stepped down past him with serene contempt. She lighted a cigarette at a tiny brass brazier, curled up among the velvet cushions on the divan, and watched the stars paling in the sky overhead.

He followed her deliberately, drew the yellow satin slipper from the folds of his sash, and held it up, poised on thumb and finger, watching the effect upon her. Not so much as the droop of her long lashes betrayed her surprise.

"Lie, and lie, and still lie, lotus lips," he said sneeringly. "This I found myself in his rooms at the hotel. And more, my beautiful. The note of invitation that has lured him to his death here to-night. Do you deny writing this?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"One must do many things when Zaradi speaks."

"He never knew of this."

"How do you know?" she smiled. "Does Achmed Zaradi make a friend and confidant of every desert dog he employs to clean the streets of bones? How do you know that I have not obeyed him every step of the way even to this moment? How do you know that Braxton is not detained by the order of the High Council itself, and I am merely the woman agent who secured his presence here?"

Baffling in her air of perfect security, her utter fearlessness of him, she had never appeared so alluring to Kali as at this moment. He threw the slipper on the floor and knelt beside her eagerly.

"What do I care how much you lie to me? You are the woman I desire above all others; that is enough. Zaradi is Egyptian. What does he know of desert blood, of the will that takes what it wants and asks no odds of the whole world of men? I have seen you grow from a wild little brat of the Arab camp on Daid-el-Marar into a girl whose look could stir me more than all the dancing women of Cairo. Do you know why I left the desert to come here at Zaradi's nod? For the chance of seeing you every day of my life, to watch and see that no other stole you from me, to let temptation grow into the great desire of my utmost self. I have sat in silence to see you dance, and known a secret closed from other men, the ecstasy of postponement."

"And you have never for one moment been anything to me but what I called you once at the oasis, brown pig of the desert." She drew herself away from his reaching arms, erect on the couch, contemptuous, aloof. Batooka stirred in pain, grunted, and tried to rise. Instantly she had evaded his grasp, and darted from the couch to the old woman's side.

"Listen to me, mareemah. Bring wine and food for Kali, and forgive him. He is merely a man in love and acts without discretion. And do not poison his wine, for he is wise and will make us taste it first; oh, he is wise as Mahomet's pet raven. And after he is refreshed he will think clearer and possibly deem it simpler to leave before Zaradi arrives."

He rose and watched the old woman hobble away, his arms folded on his breast.

"You are clever," he grunted when they were alone. "You have all of Caselli's guile and Zélie's deviltry. Your words cool the passion in my brain that blazes into fire when you are near me, but I know you lie. Ibn M'zab brought me the warning of Braxton be-

ing here. He stands outside the door yonder now to kill him if he seeks to leave your quarters. Zaradi is not coming here. I have just left him with Zélie. Raversham has tricked us all, and he dies to-night for his victory. But I do not care who wins Egypt so long as I have you in my arms out yonder in the darkness that I know. I can take you so far away from all of this that they would never find even the footprints of our horses in the wind-blown sand. And you are clever enough to know why I pause and wait your whim. I have had women and more women, and I have learned the value of that flame in your eyes, that rarest something that makes you the desired one to me. But I want you to come with me gladly, loving me fiercely, above all, as I do you."

She leaned back her head and laughed. He had weakened suddenly, his bravado broken before her careless scorn. He had betrayed himself over Raversham, and still she discredited the news. Zaradi would never permit at this crucial hour the killing of the British special commissioner. In the lower garden facing the fountain was a favorite resting place, a canopied divan with the river view. She sauntered toward it, Kali following her like one of the gray apes of the café. He stared down at her moodily when she paused by the fountain.

"The desert that calls and calls," she said, mocking his own impassioned tone. "Always the desert and the one woman to be carried away to its golden silence, to be tamed into loving. Kali, you play old tunes, and it is the new that charm us to-day. I had all I wanted of your desert in those days at Daid-el-Marar, of filth, and fighting dogs, boasting men, and silly, oppressed women whose only lure lay in the chance desire of their lords. Look at me, and remember why I was brought here. I am spoiled for you, Kali. Even if you took me away

back there with you, another daybreak might find you with your own knife twisted behind your ear as you lay on your pillow."

Her hidden threat seemed to strike the match to his suppressed violence. Suddenly it flared to fury, and he had her fast in his arms, his face buried in the soft white space between her chin and shoulder. Lifting her struggling figure high in his arms, he held her helpless, crushing her fiercely, blind and dumb in the ecstasy of possession.

The sound of her cries penetrated even to the outer corridor where Batooka stumbled reluctantly along, bearing a tray of refreshment for the unbidden guest. Alertly she listened, set down the copper tray, and sped along to the door of the old harem. Naida did not scream, but the broken, protesting voice aroused every sense of revenge the old woman possessed. She did not waste time on the threshold of the garden once she beheld the struggling girl in Kali's grasp. Gliding along the shadow of the wall like a shadow, she mounted the narrow steps to the prayer room in the tower, and pushed up the circular trapdoor. One man against another! The old law of the desert returned to her. So, between the rage of both, a woman might escape. She bent over the couch, tugging with all her strength at Barry's shoulders, rousing him from the sleep she herself had beguiled him into.

"Kali is killing her." She forced him to listen and understand her as she repeated it over and over. "Do you hear, you who love her? Go and save her. What is your life compared to hers when she has sacrificed all to hide you here? Are you a sleeping crocodile without ears that you hear her not? Kali is killing her."

Through the gray phantasma of his restless dreams Barry heard and wakened. The memory of what had occurred forced itself upon him when he saw

the wrinkled, terrified old face close to him. And while he hesitated there came from below again the choked, gasping cries of Naida, cursing with all her might the man who held her prisoner, even as she had learned from Batooka in the old oasis days.

CHAPTER XIX.

He seemed to gain a sudden clarity of vision, to feel strength again in nerves and muscles. Thrusting back the clamorous old woman who clung to him, he rose to his feet and found his way down the steps to the balcony opening on the garden. The form of Kali showed in sharp relief against the lightening sky, with the girl Naida in his embrace. Barry felt a peculiar savage zest in going after him with bared fists, in seeing the amazement in the dark, convulsed face that stared back at him after the first smashing blow that sent the caravan owner reeling to the ground. Before he staggered to his feet Kali gave the Bedouin fighting cry, the old rallying "aya-aya!"

Naida heard and realized his intent. Calling to Batooka, she turned to run back into the living quarters and close the outer doors, but the Agha's huge figure came plunging through the rooms like some great beast of prey at the call of its master. He seized a carved stool and brought it down with a crash on the head of the American as he closed into a struggle with the other man.

"Batooka!" Naida called in desperation. "Oh, God, where are you? Batooka, they are killing him. Barry, beloved!" She strove to reach him as he lay prostrate on the ground, but Kali swung her off with a backward thrust. He gave quick orders to the Agha, and they bound him in Turkish fashion, the feet fastened together at the ankles, wrists bound together, and both again drawn fast under the back. Trussed so, he might have been tossed up and

swung on a cross pole, as desert prisoners were borne. Lastly Kali gagged him with his own scarf and directed the Agha to leave them. Grinning with white, bared teeth, he retired. He had taken full revenge for his own defeat in drawing the cords so tightly that they cut into the flesh.

After that one impassioned outcry Naida had stood in silence, her eyes closed, her face uplifted, expecting the death of Barry. Now with the Agha gone she turned expectantly to Kali, a flood of entreaty and threats pouring from her lips. He lighted a cigarette from the enameled casket open on the little round stand by the couch. Only the fire in his eyes betrayed his excitement.

"You have lied to me about this dog lying yonder. You have sworn that you do not love him, that you were acting under Zaradi's orders when you visited his rooms and stole the Drake papers. Tell the truth now. You have loved him from the first time he came to the café. You have betrayed Zaradi and the Islam cause to save him. And more than that. The dead monk did not come to whisper love in your ears. He came to tell you no Arab blood ran in your veins, to make you a Christian spy in the household of the Cairo leader. And he was knifed for his jealousy. Am I right?"

The eyes of Barry watched the girl as she listened, her slim, half-clad figure rigid, white hands clenched tightly at her sides, only her restless eyes glancing from him to Kali. Now he would know she had told him the truth, she thought with exultant heart. He had believed she had deliberately robbed him, had accused her of leading him into Zaradi's net of intrigue. Unconsciously Kali would clear her in his eyes and restore his faith in her. Her eyes seemed to beseech him to understand.

"What did you do with the Drake letter?" Her silence and contempt mad-

dened Kali. "Stole it to pass on to Caselli and his pack of cowardly Christian jackals? Do you know why? I can tell you—Kali, whom you despise and call a brown pig of the desert. You say you hate the desert. You are born of the desert. I picked you from your dead mother's breast, where you both lay out in the sand. I took you to Daid-el-Marar by Zélie de Marigny's orders. You think I lie. Ask Zaradi, then. Ask him who your father was. Ask him why Zélie bargained with him to have you trained as a dancer. Ask why you were marked for market as soon as they saw your beauty."

Naida's gaze never wavered. Her eyes with their level glance of supreme scorn seemed to clash with that of the Bedouin in open combat. But when she attempted to turn away he caught and held her by her wrists, twisting them as he had Batooka's, dragging her up into his embrace by sheer force.

"I would have taken you away and made you my bride," he said between set teeth. "Now we choose the other way. Here in this place of joy you shall dance for me before the eyes of your lover. And when you tire or refuse me he dies. You look at me as if I were dirt beneath your feet, too filthy even to be trampled on. And you shall dance as you have never done before for the eyes of any man. Why should I take you into the desert when all the sweetness of life is here, and he shall lie there helpless and behold our love until that moment when I throw him into the Well of Swords. Then we will go out together into the golden silence and let Zaradi answer for him."

"Let me die with him." She hung her head to avoid his seeking lips, fighting with all her strength against the steel clasp of his arms. Suddenly he released her, his passion swept aside by the keenness for revenge.

He called for Batooka and the Agha, and ordered wine and music. Lamps

were lighted along the balcony even while the rose flush in the east lightened the garden terraces. The curtains were drawn back to give full view of the divan and feast to the helpless prisoner bound upon the ground.

When Naida hesitated at the first mounting beat of music from the sleepy Arab players behind the balcony Kali gave a sharp command to Ibn M'zab. She cried out to them to wait when she saw them raise Barry and carry him to the edge of the well, head down. Anything to gain time, she thought desperately. Batooka had never failed her before though now she glided about like a haunting shadow, cowed and obedient to Kali's merest nod.

"Dance, Naida," he called to her tauntingly. "And when you tire you shall know the love of Kali, and the beloved owl shall lie there in a greater torture than the swords of the well could bring."

He clapped his palms together and the music quickened behind the curtains, low, throbbingly recurrent, irresistible. It swept the memory of Barry back to that night at the Café l'Orient. The same lawless desert spirit was captured in this, the same rousing call to the unleashed, subconscious self. Gagged and bound as he was, his eyes sought those of the girl in warning, entreating her dumbly not to answer the summons, to let them do what they wanted to with him.

She smiled back at him with infinite understanding and love in her dark eyes. Batooka, at Kali's order, had loosened the tinted veils about her. She stepped from their close folds, her face uplifted to the light in the eastern sky. The Agha poured wine in Kali's emptied glass, yawned, and crouched with heavy, drowsy eyes, watching the bound man by the fountain. Batooka had stolen noiselessly away to the far end of the balcony overlooking the Nile. She had forsaken her, Naida thought bitterly.

There remained only the delay of the fatal moment when Kali's whim should be fully gratified. As she started the show movements of the dance her mind gave one suggestion after another in reckless sequence. She could appear to yield to him and kill him with the slim knife with the turquoise hilt which she had concealed in the folds of her sash. Still there would be Ibn M'zab to reckon with.

Kali moved impatiently, calling out to her in Arabic as he leaned forward, his eyes like some aroused wild animal in their blazing intentness, watching her veiled form move in the amber-and-rose light. Hating him from the inmost depths of her whole being, she danced as she never had before, alluring, defiant, yielding, challenging—anything, she thought, to keep him interested and enthralled, to make him forget the man who lay with fast-closed eyes by the rim of the Well of Swords, awaiting death.

There was the abandon of the devotee in her movements, in her rapt, pale face. The veil of gold tissue had slipped from her head. She was startlingly Caucasian in her delicate fairness of skin. Higher the cadence of the music mounted like a wave of desire with restless reiteration, over and over, curious minor chords breaking into tremulous low notes like broken love words.

And suddenly the tall, bronzed figure of Kali leaped upright from the couch

as she neared him. Without warning he seized her fast in his embrace. As if signaled, the Agha rose and vanished beyond the curtains, the music ceased abruptly. Except for the man upon the lower terrace and the forgotten Batooka, they were alone. She fought him desperately, despairingly, and Kali laughed as her nails tore at the flesh on his throat and cheeks. Lifting her in his arms, he knelt on one knee beside the divan, and called back to Barry.

"Watch well, beloved owl, and die ten thousand cursed deaths in the joy of Kali. Her lips are sweeter than all the desert roses; her skin is soft and tender as their petals. The perfume of her hair is more intoxicating than wine, you dog of a Christian."

His voice ended in silence except for the broken, terrified call from Naida.

"Batooka, Batooka, kill him, I tell you, kill him!"

From the shadows of the balcony there came no answer. The old woman, peering into the river distances, moaned and swayed sideways to and fro helplessly. But from the inner rooms Ibn M'zab stumbled, fully awake now.

"Zaradi is here!" he gasped. "Down at the landing."

Kali's arms released the girl reluctantly. He rose upright, his first thought for the American, of the chance for discovery if his body were pitched into the well.

"Not the well," he said. "Throw him into the river."

TO BE CONTINUED.



YOU would have shapely arms? Then play pool," says a famous Russian singer. "I found long ago that playing billiards and pool every day helped to make my arms symmetrical, and improved the color and texture of the skin. Now that they are so much revealed, arms are very important," she warbled. Take to the cue, O beauty!



Sauce for the Goose

By Alison Spence



FELICIA ORME heard only snatches of the conversation:

"Tell the premier for me—Solidly behind his government—Seizure of Corfu—Avoid European conflagration—" Much more than that, scattered sentences when the waiter wasn't there, undertones between patently light talk to mask the gravity of the rest, all interpolated with politely apologetic sighs and signs directed toward her by Mr. Underminister Etienne for being thus led, by his political enthusiasm and his respect for Hugh Morrill, into even a moment's lack of consideration for a woman as lovely as she.

Of the sense of the words she heard—or might have heard—Miss Orme took but little note. That was an affair solely of Hugh's and Monsieur Etienne's. This odd luncheon party meant far more to her, somehow, than the fate of nations. What she gathered from it was not that France would do this, that, or the other thing. Rather was it that she was suddenly very proud of herself for having inspired the love of a man like Hugh Morrill.

For Morrill had just been named by Washington to go to the new republic of Herzonias as chargé d'affaires. He had been a free-lance journalist before he entered the diplomatic, and as such had made himself trusted by every European chancellery. How more plainly could be shown the respect in which he was held, than by the very fact that he

had been chosen by a French minister to convey an unofficial message to the government of Herzonias before he presented his own credentials. Of the importance of that mission she took no cognizance. To her the most important fact about it was that Morrill should have been trusted with it. That trust symbolized him in her mind.

Moreover she found a comforting satisfaction in the *raison d'être* of this tripartite luncheon at the *Pré Catalan's* most sequestered table. It was a last-minute thought of the underminister's to use Morrill as his unofficial messenger. Morrill, leaving on the Orient express at three, had previously arranged to lunch with Felicia. One couldn't—so M. Etienne admitted—cancel a luncheon with the woman one loved, even for an affair such as his. Least of all would M. Etienne permit such a thing. Would it be at all permissible for him to lunch with them, leaving early? Trust Mademoiselle Orme with his semisecret business? What a question to ask, to have even enter one's mind! Hadn't he known her father and her mother? Hadn't he known her since her brief residence in Paris as her brother's châteline, so to speak? And didn't he know her brother—younger brother—now attached to the American embassy as his first appointment in a diplomatic career? Trust Mademoiselle Orme? Whom should one trust, then?

All this Morrill had explained by tele-

phone to Felicia by way of explaining why M. Etienne should be permitted to lunch with them. And, of course, it gave Felicia more pride in being herself, in being an Orme. Pride, too, that her brother Barrington was so well thought of by the French government.

"And in the event that Greece——" Morrill was saying, in those cautious undertones.

Just then a somewhat boisterous party of South Americans got up to leave. They had cut off her view into the main dining room and out into the glassed-in porch beyond, crowded now as always at this hour with the gayest and most colorful of Parisian crowds. And as they left, these South Americans, there came into her vision with startling suddenness the sight of her brother Barrington, away across the room, lunching with a woman whom she did not know.

At first sight of the pair she was conscious of nothing but that sense of justifiable pride in him. He was so clean looking, so disingenuous and unsophisticated, and yet, somehow, a man of the world. The fair hair slicked back upon his shapely head, the promise of powerful frame which his careless but perfectly fitting lounge suit held forth, his strong wrists and brown, rather awkward hands that she could guess still bore the marks of the oar in the university races of last June—all these externals inspired her with a quick sisterly love for him.

That, in turn, opened her eyes to a danger signal which, even at that distance, was plain enough for all the world to see who might chance to be interested: a reckless light that passion brought into his blue eyes as they devoured that slight, very smart, and mundane brunette who drank his champagne and basked in his worship. Barrington was infatuated, intensely infatuated with the woman; a woman too old for him, far too fascinating; a woman not of the social set they belonged to; a woman—so Felicia

guessed with a flaming antagonism—completely unworthy of him.

The more Felicia looked at the pair, the more she became enthralled by a sure sense of drama in the making. All her life she had been her brother's confidante. Yet never had he spoken to her of any woman who answered this description. Why not? Why? Unless he was ashamed of the affair. How long could he have known her to be so completely enamored of her? Surely long enough for him to have mentioned her to Felicia, unless—and in that word were awesome potentialities.

Felicia could watch the unfolding of the drama without hindrance. Morrill and monsieur le sous-ministre were deeply engrossed in one another, for the underminister's time was growing short. Barrington had eyes or thought for none but the woman. And she, enchanting as she was already—Felicia had to admit that fact—permitted no flagging of her seductions, no minute to go by that was not fraught with attentions to Barrington, obvious ones which any but a love-blind man could see through, subtler sorts which made Felicia more than ever realize the caliber of the woman and Barrington's danger. The fascination of that danger riveted her eyes upon the pair, and now she saw a curious pantomime enacted between them.

The woman searched her bag fruitlessly for a second or two. Then Barrington, as if in ready answer to his companion's fruitless search, drew out his pocketbook. Ah, yes, an affair of money already. But, no; it was not that. What Barrington drew from his pocketbook was nothing more than a calling card. Upon this the woman wrote a few words and gave it back to him. He put it carelessly in his waistcoat pocket. Then she began to toy with a ring she wore, a ring which Felicia judged at that distance to be a magnificent ruby. Suddenly she slipped the ring off her

finger, and, with an abrupt gesture, as if she feared—or at least play acted—that she might change her mind before her quick purpose was executed, she put the ring into Barrington's hand and coyly closed his fingers over it. He transferred the precious freight to his waistcoat pocket without examination. Incomprehensible puzzle already! Yet worse was to come.

Mr. Underminister Etienne was not so completely engrossed in Morrill's conversation that he had not an occasional discreet moment for a gallant glance at Felicia and thus, presently, discovered that her wits were wool-gathering. Thereupon, at imminent risk of apoplexy, he trained his burned-out, popping eyes to see what so much intrigued her, and brought them back to her full of a sudden sympathy:

"*Ma foi*," he ejaculated, "*la petite comtesse*—" and he checked himself abruptly.

Felicia's pride of family instantly erected defenses.

"Yes," she said with studied carelessness. "Pretty little thing, isn't she?"

"Ah, mademoiselle," replied M. Etienne gravely, "but too much so."

Now, of course, Hugh Morrill realized what was astir, and, manlike, blurted out:

"Good heavens, Felicia, how long has Barry been thick with the Countess Julietta?"

Still Felicia was impelled to evasion for sake of dust in the eyes of the underminister.

"Not very long, Hugh. Passing flirtation sort of thing."

M. Etienne took it all with exasperating gravity.

"But, mademoiselle, is it that he knows who she is?"

What answer to make to that when Felicia herself didn't know? It wasn't a part of M. Etienne's gallantry to put a woman into such a position. Felicia instantly, if unconsciously, revealed her

distaste for discussing the matter further with him.

"Doesn't it look as if he did?" she parried, however anxious she was instantly to probe to the bottom the mystery about that chic, enticing little woman who held her hulking brother in the hollow of her hand.

M. Etienne was convinced of nothing save that he had been guilty of a slight *faux pas*. Unwilling as he was to drop the affair, his chivalry was in the ascendant and, with a sharp and unmistakable warning glance to Morrill to take the affair upon his own shoulders, he withdrew himself from the situation with a brief:

"Your brother is plainly to be congratulated upon a flirtation so delicious."

Another party came to the table but lately made vacant by the South Americans. Felicia's view of Barrington and his companion was shut off. M. Etienne looked no longer in that direction; rather, he plunged the more spiritedly, as if by way of amends to Felicia, into the remainder of his affair with Hugh Morrill, and soon thereafter took his leave of them, as he had previously insisted upon doing.

Scarcely was he out of earshot when Felicia asked breathlessly:

"For Heaven's sake, Hugh, who is that woman?"

Morrill was thus brought back from craning his neck to see *la petite comtesse*. He looked at Felicia an instant before he replied, and when he spoke he affected nonchalance:

"No one for you to bother your head about, dear."

"But it is, Hugh. I know she is, if only from the way M. Etienne spoke of her. Tell me who she is."

"Her name? The Contessa Julietta Varny."

"But you're keeping things from me. Her name means nothing. Tell me the truth about her. You're keeping things back, Hugh, to save me from worry.

That's not fair. It's unselfish of you, but—but it doesn't help me any. I must know who she is."

Morrill was plainly troubled, in spite of his affectation of nonchalance.

"Has he never mentioned her to you?" he parried.

"Never."

"Well, don't take it too much to heart. I'll drop him a word about her. Nothing more will be necessary."

"But that will never work out with him, Hugh. I know him better than you. Can't you see? He's completely dominated by her; he wears it on his sleeve. Didn't you notice it? He'll take it awfully hard. He's as like as not to chuck everything. It's his first real affair. Hugh, do tell me, please, dear. Keeping it back only hurts me the more."

Morrill scrutinized her at length.

"I believe you are, perhaps, right about it. It's a mess, right enough. The Countess Julietta is of Montenegrin birth, Italian by marriage, widowed by the war; one of the subtlest, most dangerous of intrigantes in Europe to-day. All the embassies and chancelleries know her, but that makes no difference to her. She gets what she wants. For example, do you remember, in August, the suicide of Poliotis, undersecretary for foreign affairs in Athens?"

Felicia gasped.

"Hugh, don't tell me——"

Morrill nodded gravely.

"Yes, and when the Italian commissioners were murdered in Albania Italy was already prepared for the occupation of Corfu. That was la petite comtesse."

"And now it's Barry she's after."

"Well, don't be too upset about it, dear. He's an Orme; he'll pull through."

"Oh, but if a world-old, sophisticated man like Poliotis—— Oh, Hugh, what shall we do about it? It'll kill him; or, worse, ruin him."

Morrill studied her again.

"I've the best notion in the world to ask for leave, stay over, and see this thing through."

"No, no; that would never do. I and my affairs can't be permitted to interfere with you. If I thought I was an obstacle to you, I'd give up everything. No, you must go on and forget about it."

"Yes, but——"

"And even if you did stay over, you could do nothing about it. I know, Hugh. It's something I'll have to deal with myself."

"Felicia, dear, what in the world could you do?"

"I'll manage, in some way. You're to remember that, and don't let it disturb you. No one can do it as well as I."

Morrill, watching her with a sudden access of admiration, was convinced. It was as if some bigger woman than he knew, a woman newly endowed with unusual powers, had spoken through Felicia's lips. For Felicia, it was an affectation of strength and self-confidence that she had assumed in order that he might go on his way untroubled by this dangerous state of affairs he was leaving behind him. She was more than ever worried; nevertheless, she had managed to convince him that she was very sure of herself, with that serene power he loved in her.

Returning from the station after seeing Morrill off to his new post, Felicia felt as if she were entering a vast, dark cave, peopled with terrors unknown which she was left alone to combat. She was of two minds whether she should not go at once to the embassy, see her brother in his office there, and beg him to leave the woman he was intrigued with. But of what avail that? When he was so fresh from her Felicia's mission would be in vain; and, even if she extracted from him a promise, that would not be enough. More than a promise from him was necessary to re-

assure her that the affair would lead him to no harm.

Hence she drove straight to their home, busy every minute of the short journey with making and discarding plans of campaign, sifting possibilities from probabilities. Arrived at their splendid apartment in the Victor Hugo, her first inquiry was whether Barrington had been home. Assured that he had not, she next called his man, a stolid-faced and unemotional Englishman who had served Barrington at the university. To him she made the one appeal that was likely to be fruitful of results:

"I have reason to believe that my brother has been indiscreet in a fashion that is likely to cost him his post in the service."

"Yes, my lady."

"He is rather young, you know, and not—not as sagacious as an older man might be."

"Yes, my lady."

"But it is not yet too late to avert the effects of his carelessness."

"Meaning, my lady, that you can avert it?"

"At least I hope I can, though not without your help."

"Anything I can do, of course—"

"I am asking you a favor, Rogers. When he comes in this evening to dress he is very likely to have in this"—with a gesture she indicated which—"waistcoat pocket one of his own cards, upon which there is strange handwriting. It would help vastly to know what was written on it. There may be a ring, too, but no matter about that. Watch him carefully when he changes. If he takes the card out of his waistcoat and lays it down—well, Rogers, I can only leave it to you. But please let me know as soon as you have failed or succeeded. And, of course, he's not to know that you are interested."

"Very naturally, my lady. Young men are quick to resent. You can trust me."

Barrington came in rather late for tea—nearly six, in fact. Distrained, hunted, but under rigid restraint, of course. Felicia expected this. As he threw back his coat and lounged in an easy-chair she was relieved to see the slight bulge in his waistcoat pocket where the ring reposed. Again and again his brown hands sought it, as if he caressed it—an unusual gesture which in itself would have attracted her attention at any other time. Now, however, she chose to take no notice of it.

"Thank Heaven there's no one in for tea, Felicia," he exclaimed rather irritably. "I'm tired; beastly day."

Felicia smiled a Mona Lisa smile.

"I thought, on the contrary, that you had had rather a fine day."

"A fine day?" he repeated, instantly on the defense. "How? What do you mean?"

"I was lunching at the Pré Catalan with Hugh."

The glance he gave her was eloquent. Not for an instant, however, did he betray himself as feeling guilty. On the contrary, he seemed to be relieved that Felicia knew.

"Well, and what of it?" he said.

"Who is she, Barry? And why have you delayed so long having me meet her?"

He lighted a cigarette with too much pains.

"Oh, I don't see much of her. She doesn't go about; living here rather quietly and only temporarily. That's why you've not met her yet. Rather a decent sort. I feel sorry for her in many ways. Hasn't any too fine a life of it. It's nothing for you to think about twice, Felicia. Casual acquaintance; and she'll be leaving Paris in a fortnight or so."

"But she's such a lovely little thing. What is she? French, American, English?"

"Oh, she's class enough. I met her when I was in London last month

through Lord Beston. She's Austrian, I believe. She is rather nice, isn't she?"

"Very nice. She decidedly intrigued me. Married, or not?"

"Married. That's the crime of it. To a beast of a husband. That's the only reason I see her occasionally—to sort of make up to her for what she's missed in life. No harm in that, is there?"

Clumsy evasions! His duplicity was all the more proof of the seriousness of the case. Barry had never been anything but frank with her. Again she smiled disarmingly.

"Why do you have 'harm' so continually on your mind, Barry? I'm sure I haven't mentioned it."

"Who said anything about harm?"

"I probably misunderstood."

"You're queer this afternoon, Felicia. I suppose it's because of Hugh's going?" In that question there was unusual directness. Barry was suddenly no longer a boy.

Felicia felt that he had checkmated her.

"If I'm queer," she said, "I suppose that's why." And somehow found no more to be said on the subject.

Followed desultory conversation while they smoked a couple of cigarettes. Barry fumbled nervously with his watch, felt frequently that ring in his other pocket, and finally arose abruptly.

"I must toddle along and dress," he announced.

At seven o'clock he was gone. Rogers came to Felicia shortly after that.

"Mr. Barrington guarded the card most carefully, my lady," said he, "and took it with him."

"And you didn't find an opportunity——"

"Yes; I managed it. On the card was written nothing but an address."

"You took note of that?"

"Yes, my lady. Fifty-six Boulevard Sebastopol, *deuxième étage*."

"Thanks, Rogers."

At about the same hour Gralnic, the shabby but heroic exiled dictator of Herzonion, called on the Countess Julietta in her bijou apartment just across the Alexander Bridge. Though she was then in the hands of her maid, preparing for dinner with Barrington Orme, she admitted Gralnic at once to the privacy of her dressing room. He bowed his gray mane and ponderous shoulders heavily over her hand.

"It is silly of you to come here so often, Stepan," she chided him. "The French secret service know both you and me, and where we are to be found."

"But we are harmless so far as concerns the French, madame. And things move so slowly. How are they going now?"

Julietta sighed.

"The boy is quite docile. He's a dear boy, too."

"Your excessive kindness of heart," remonstrated the broken man, "will not permit you to weaken at the last moment?"

"No, no, Stepan," she said tenderly. "Not this time. It is too simple an affair for the boy. He has his life before him. He can make for himself another career. Besides that, I am not doing this for money. I am doing it for you, mon ami, because once I loved you, and might again if you were in power. But now I cannot. And again, I am decided to go through with it partly out of resentment against his sister. She, by chance, saw us in the restaurant to-day and hated me. She will talk against me to the boy; she will try to question him; she will try to turn him against me. I think I hate her. For that alone must I succeed. I have made the way easy for her descent."

"But time presses. Already this afternoon they say that the new minister left for Herzonion. Within three days he will present his credentials officially to the president of the republic. Without at least three days advance notice of

the American government's instructions to him, my coup d'état must fail. It is my last chance. I must know by to-morrow night at the latest."

"Never fear, Stepan. What I have said I have said. Come to me in the Sebastopol apartment at midnight—no, at one o'clock to-night. I must have as much time as possible to put the boy into a properly—*comment dirai-je*—ductile frame of mind. By two o'clock this morning you shall have the duplicate instructions from the American embassy."

"Madame! Can it be true?"

"As true as most of the things I do, Stepan, for those I love. There will be no changes in the conduct of the affair, except that it is rather likely that the boy's sister will be there. She, I imagine, will have read the card which she saw me give him in the restaurant. It put me off a moment to be discovered by her and M. Etienne. But later it occurred to me that she could help us, rather than hinder us, by trying to help her brother. And so, as I say, I have nicely smoothed the way for her. Take my cue in dealing with her if she should be there."

"At one, you say?"

"Yes, or thereabouts. A little later, a little earlier. It doesn't matter much."

"Madame," said Gralnic with deep emotion, "you have lifted a vast weight from my shoulders."

"Don't forget me, Stepan, when again you have the power. And, Stepan, I had the boy pledge my ring for me—the ruby which Constantin gave me. He should get at least forty thousand francs for it. I lacked the nerve to do it myself. I fancy he will advance it from his own pocket and keep the ring. You shall have the money; you have need of it."

"Madame, but you too have need of money."

"Talk no more of it. Go now. Things will be different when we see

one another again. And—and, Stepan, don't come too early. He's a dear boy, you know."

"That, madame," he returned gallantly, "will make it all the more difficult for me to stay away."

Upon young Barrington Orme that night were lavished all the allurements which that most enticing woman in Europe was possessed of. The charms that had killed a Poliotis, disrupted ministries, made or averted wars, were showered freely upon him, even with an unstinted freedom because la petite comtesse found it not unpleasant to play with this unspoiled lad. Dinner at Ciro's, "Manon" at the opera, than which nothing could have been more admirably suited to cater to her purpose. And then:

"I have a surprise for you, *mon bien-aimé*," she announced. "We shall complete this most perfect of nights with supper at the apartment."

Orme gasped, and crushed her hand in the comparative seclusion of his coupé.

"But is it safe—for you?" he remonstrated breathlessly. "Did you not say that I couldn't come to your apartment, lest your husband—?"

"Dearest of friends, not that. Of course I shouldn't dare in my own place. But in the Sebastopol, in my friends' apartment, the one they are lending us for meetings— You must be very good to them when I am gone."

"I shall worship them because they are your friends."

"And to-night we go there—now. They have arranged a supper for us. Their chef is not bad. They themselves are in Nice over the week."

"They—away. You and I——"

"Say no more of it now. Wait and see what the supper will be like."

Twenty minutes later they had arrived at the Sebastopol address. While Orme lingered to give orders to his

chauffeur Julietta hurried in for a word with the concierge:

"Has the American woman been tampering?" she whispered.

"Oui, madame. She is above—in the apartment, I believe."

"*Tant mieux*," breathed la petite comtesse just as Orme rejoined her.

And as Julietta retired to a tiny dressing room to don negligee for the supper she repeated the question to the maid.

"Oui, madame," the answer was reiterated. "A thousand francs she gave me. I told her you were coming here. She is secluded in my own room. The door is open so that she can hear."

But the Countess Julietta could not make Orme betray himself too grossly to his sister. She kept the conversation low-pitched, at times lacking altogether. As for Orme, the soft lights, the delicate wines, the spell of her enticements carried him beyond the power or need of speech. He was hers as completely as ever man was woman's; and her dominance over him was made the more potent by her delicacy. She was wise enough to know the type of man she had to deal with. Here was no Poliotis, no Constantin who needed more voluptuous charms for their enthrallment. La petite comtesse began even to have twinges of conscience about it, began a little to pity Orme as he sat there stifled, tensely restrained, marveling at the miracle of this he had never known before. Gralnic would soon be coming; it was high time to lead the way to that affair.

There came an alarming peal of the bell. Could that be Gralnic already? He was not due before one o'clock.

"Who can that be?" gasped Orme, in a sudden tumult of alarm. "Your friends who own the apartment?"

"I suppose so—returned unexpectedly. See who it is," she commanded the servant who appeared for orders, at the same time mentally berating Gralnic for his too early appearance.

With the opening of the outside door

a strange man burst in upon them, a lowering, heavy man whose very presence somehow imposed silence upon those who faced him. For an instant he stood in the doorway in dramatic pose. To the Countess Julietta he spoke a few words in a tongue which Orme did not understand. Orme was instantly on his feet and, as if dictated to by an instinctive desire to shield her, stepped between her and the strange man.

The stranger lowered at him.

"Who are you, sir?" he demanded of Orme in evil French.

"How does it come to be an affair of yours, monsieur?" Orme returned.

"Because the woman you are having supper with, under these—slightly suspicious circumstances, happens to be my wife."

Orme slowly turned his head to look at Julietta, and as slowly faced the stranger again, as if here was something completely incredible.

"Your wife?" he repeated. "You are Count Varny?"

"I am Count Varny. She is my wife. I've been waiting and waiting for exactly this occasion."

Orme again turned slowly to Julietta.

"Is this true?" he asked, in a queer sort of tense calm. "Is he your husband?"

Words in the strange tongue passed between them—a second's speech only. Then to Orme Julietta nodded affirmatively. Orme stepped nearer to Varny.

"What do you propose to do about it?" he inquired of the intruder.

"Make you pay, of course. That's what I've been waiting for; that's why I've been watching my wife's folly with you, knowing that sooner or later it must fetch me what I want. Now I shall make you pay."

"How much? Not that I intend to pay anything, but that I am curious to know how much you have in mind."

Julietta goaded herself now to act

the part that was forced upon her by Stepan Gralnic's last-moment change of plan.

"Don't, Stepan," she entreated the stranger. "It's my fault, not his. He's not to be blamed. I loved him——"

"Sh-h," Orme checked her tenderly. "Let us first hear what it is he wants. Now, then, monsieur, I am listening. What is it you would have me pay?"

"A small enough price, considering. You have access to your embassy, I believe—a night key?"

"What? The embassy? Why the embassy?"

"Your embassy, yes. What I want is very little. Merely the embassy copies of your government's instructions to Mr. Morrill, who has just gone as chargé d'affaires to Herzonja."

"So that is what you want!" To judge by Orme's tone, it was a price beyond the combined fortunes of the world. Again he looked about at Julietta—a man dazed, baffled, not comprehending.

"Is it not small enough price? You—and she—are lucky to get out of it so cheaply."

"Cheaply! And exactly what do you mean by 'get out of it'?"

"I mean that I shall forget all I have seen here; that I shall take her back as my wife, say nothing about your intrigue with her."

"And if I refuse to pay the price you ask?"

"Then I shall flaunt you both—divorce her, and make you as notorious as she," he replied coolly.

"Do it, then. Your price I can't pay."

Julietta, acting perfectly by this time, spoke with a fear-stricken voice.

"Oh, Barry, don't say that. For my sake. It would kill me. Don't you owe it to me? Didn't you promise me——"

"Don't," Orme interrupted her. "Let me think."

"There should be no use of thinking," Varny spoke again. "You are ruined—

and she—unless you pay the price. Not a large price, either."

"Why do you want Morrill's instructions?" Orme asked, always in that queer, tense voice.

Julietta explained:

"He can't do any grave harm with them. Do—do, for my sake!"

"You want them to-night?" Orme asked, like a blind man feeling his way in strange places.

"As soon as you can get them here."

Julietta had another word.

"Do, for my sake. If you fail me, Barry——"

"You want me to go at once, and get them?"

"I shall wait here for you."

"If it weren't for her——" Orme began.

"That we understand," Varny said. "You had best go at once."

Yet Orme did not move. Still dazed, he looked from one to the other of them. Then, from behind him, from the door leading to the pantry, came Felicia's voice:

"Barry, can't you see plainly?"

"Felicia!"

The Countess Julietta and her so-called husband were appropriately alarmed by this new development.

"Who is this woman?" asked Julietta.

"I am his sister. I think you know me, madame."

Orme, of course, took possession of his sister.

"Felicia, what are you doing here? Spying on me?"

"Not spying, Barry. I am here only to save you from yourself. Can't you see it's all a blackmailing scheme? Barry, are you completely blinded? Can't you see that this woman brought you here? That this interruption by her husband—— Oh, Barry, can't you see plainly?"

"Blackmail? Blackmail? You think that Julietta——"

"Of course. She's notorious."

Again Orme turned that dazed, stupefied look upon Julietta.

"I was beginning—a little—to fear it, but it's hard to believe. Oh, terribly hard."

"Believe it, Barry," Felicia begged.

"I wouldn't be here otherwise."

"I do believe it—way down. But—
Yes, I do believe it."

Julietta knew that he was no longer her prey.

"And so you don't intend to get us those instructions?"

Orme shook his head. Julietta hurried on:

"Then perhaps your sister will help you to decide in our favor. We are desperate, both of us. It means my husband's return to power to have them, or his complete life failure if we do not have them. Mademoiselle Orme, we had one of two ways in which to secure those instructions from your government. One was to obtain the duplicate copies from your embassy; the other was to secure the originals from your fiancé, who is now carrying them on his way to Herzonion. The one way has failed. A wire to the Orient express at Prague will secure them for us by the other way—at any cost."

Felicia was left in no doubt as to what she meant.

"You mean—at any cost?"

"At any cost. And east of Prague lives don't count for much."

Felicia stared at her brother.

"Barry, do you hear?" she said.

"Yes," he nodded.

"You see what you have done—for all of us?"

"Yes," he said, bowed with shame and remorse.

"There are, of course, no two ways about it," Felicia said slowly, as if thinking to herself. "You have the embassy key with you?"

"But, Felicia, you mean you are going to give in to these—these crooks?"

"Is there anything else to be done,

with no way to warn Hugh? Come with me, Barry, and get what they want. Monsieur le conte, will you come with us? Barry, will you come with us now, at once, and get for him what he wants?"

Julietta changed that plan.

"My husband will stay here with me.

You shall fetch them here to me. An hour should be ample. If within the hour they are not safely in our hands, the wire will go to Prague."

"Bien, madame. As you will. Only give us the full hour. Come, Barry."

Orme could not believe his ears.

"Felicia, you can't be—it's not like you to surrender."

"It's for Hugh, Barry. Now I understand a little how you felt. Please hurry." She caught him by the arm, and led him out to the hall. The servant followed at Julietta's whispered request and gave him hat and coat.

As the door closed behind them the Countess Julietta smiled at the man who was left with her.

"What is sauce for the goose appears to be sauce for the gander," she said. "Now tell me about Stepan Gralnic, if you will, please."

"I have no doubt, madame," was the reply, "but that he will be here soon to explain himself. And since they are bringing the instructions here to you I may be permitted to withdraw."

As the door opened to let Felicia and her brother out they found themselves face to face with Morrill who, accompanied by another man, had been either in the act of listening at the door, or on the point of demanding admittance. Felicia was the first to recover from her amazement at this most unexpected of developments.

"But, Hugh, it can't be you?"

"Fortunately, yes. I seem to have come back just in time. Let us all get away from here as quickly as possible. I can't believe what I heard you say in there, Felicia. I can't believe it."

"What did you hear? And why are you back?"

"Let us get into a cab," he parried, "and then we shall talk." But even he could not so much restrain his impatience. "Again, Felicia, I can't believe that you would so easily surrender to those people."

"Surrender, Hugh? Exactly what do you mean by that?"

"You and Barry are now on your way to the embassy——"

"You should first be very sure that we are, Hugh, before you charge us too severely. Let us wait for our explanations, unless you care to tell why you are back here."

"That is a simple enough matter. I was worried beyond reason lest you should do something like this to pull Barry out of the mire. I expected worse things than this. I left the train at Nancy and came back. Barry's man told me that you undoubtedly had come to this address. And, you see, I have not arrived in vain."

They reached the street, and found a cab waiting there for Morrill. Morrill dismissed his friend, and the rest of them climbed into the cab.

"Is it to the embassy, or home?" Morrill demanded abruptly and somewhat ironically.

"It would be rather difficult to convince you now," Felicia returned, "that it was never to have been the embassy. I much appreciate your solicitude, but I'm rather sorry you came back so opportunely—or inopportunely. I had the appearance of surrendering to them merely that we might get away without trouble."

Young Orme spoke up at that.

"And you don't propose to give them the instructions?"

"Of course not."

"Then what will happen to all of us? It's far from finished yet," Orme remonstrated.

"It is completely finished, on the con-

trary. I hope, Barry, that you have had your lesson."

But Morrill's mind was on another track.

"It is lucky that I came back. Felicia, imagine your going into a den like that. Those people are desperate. It was a hundred-to-one chance your getting away alive. Yes, I mean just that. Barry, if you don't take your lesson this time! Oh, it's fortunate I came back. Things might have been far otherwise."

"I took no chances, Hugh. The man who called himself Varny was a friend of mine—or, rather, of M. Etienne's. I was completely safe. Do you think I would be rash enough to——"

Young Orme had to have that explained.

"You can't mean what you say, Felicia."

"Barry, I do mean it. I took the only way to save you from your folly. You never would have believed evil of that woman if you hadn't been shown it—actually shown it. I wanted to demonstrate it to you safely—to your safety. I frankly don't know what she wanted with you, nor why she wanted you. But I did know that it was for no good reason. And so, to convince you, I arranged a practical demonstration. I thought the blackmailing husband would probably be her scheme, and decided to beat her to it; decided to put it all to the test when I should be around to help you in case you weakened. I hope—oh, Barry, I hope you've had your lesson from this."

"I have, I think. It's all rather hazy in my mind yet, but—but certain things I can't forget. My shame at seeing you—oh, all of it."

"Felicia, let me get this straight. You went there, with a man, a friend?" Morrill asked.

"No. I knew he was coming, Hugh, so that I should be safe in the apartment whatever happened. You see, I went to M. Etienne, swallowing pride,

you understand, and inquired what he knew about la petite comtesse. He had, of course, the French secret service report on her, which showed that she was most interested in the affairs of one Gralnic. M. Etienne and I together managed to guess within a little what the two of them could want with Barry. Not that it made any difference whether our guess was right, for Barry would have had his practical demonstration of the blackmailing husband just the same. Then I suggested my plan to M. Etienne, who approved it completely. He assigned to me a member of the French secret service to play Count Varny. I went to the apartment to be on hand to pull Barry through it if he weakened; and—yes, I admit it—to shame him the more, in any case. Yet I was proud of you, Barry. I doubt very much whether, at the last, you would have given in or not. He's an Orme, Hugh, when all is said and done."

"An Orme, Felicia," said Barry, "who is not likely again to forget the fact." No one who heard him could doubt his complete conversion.

Hugh Morrill chuckled suddenly.

"But imagine, dear, your putting it over on the great Julietta. Can you imagine the gnashing of teeth by this time?"

"Awfully hard on her, of course," Barry said, with a reversion of tenderness.

"But what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," Felicia reminded him.

"True enough," said Barry. "It's all in the game, and this time we seem to have won. We're all jolly well out of it, I think."

"Not as well as we might have been," Felicia protested, and quite earnestly, one might have thought. "It's something of a blow to know that Hugh Morrill would so far forget his real business as to come back to Paris on my business."

"Oh, but, Felicia, it's only over one day. And you can't imagine how grueling my worry was."

"But you know what I told you, Hugh."

"Yes, I know," Morrill admitted with mock contriteness. "I, too, am not altogether satisfied with the result of it all."

"In what respect?" Felicia asked.

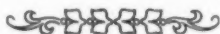
"I thought, for a moment, that you were rather keen on saving me from a violent death. It was really something of a blow to discover later you didn't care a hang about it." The chuckle in his voice was unmistakable.

"Oh, Hugh, you know——"

But young Orme interrupted his sister.

"Dry up, you two, please. This silly love-making is—is totally sickening."

Which probably proved that Barry had had his lesson.



HOW CAN I SING?

HOW can I sing who am bound by fetters
Colder than steel and sharper than lust—
I who am haunted by twisting letters
Subtle as serpents in velvet dust?

I who am stirred by any beauty—
Delicate color or word or sound—
I have been caught and throttled by duty
And buried too deep to be lightly found.

JANE BARBARA ALEXANDER.

Major Carleton's Wedding Gift



By James L. Ford

Author of "Forty Odd Years in the Literary Shop,"
"Hot Corn like," etc.



ROMANCE, aptly termed by the poet "that gracious child of France, an angel, or knight, or fairy," is, like everything else that we can neither see nor touch nor taste, imperishable. It has survived the scoffs of those realists and materialists who have sought to make us ashamed of honest emotion by dubbing it sentimentality. And wherever romance blossoms there also lurks tragedy, for love seldom reaches joyous fruition without leaving behind it some heartbreak.

In all New York there is no region whose soil offers such sparse nutrition for the growth of pure, unselfish love as that shifting playground of meretricious delight miscalled the gay quarter, where the predatory classes hold out to the unsuspecting the cup of pleasure whose foaming, bubbling surface lies perilously close to the bitter dregs beneath. In its northward march far downtown this quarter has clung closely to the hotels, for it is to strangers that the lure of its lights is most appealing. Its present locale is in that region threaded by Broadway above Forty-second Street, where the nightly electric display has given to that thoroughfare the name of the great white way, and the ceaseless noise in the street and the swiftness of the pace has caused the region to be known to the wise ones as the roaring forties.

To the superficial observer the electric lights fully account for the crowds

that fill these streets after nightfall, but those wise in the ways of the town are aware that the gambling fever, which marks the entire district for its own, is a far more potent lure than anything that merely dazzles the eye. This fever has gone into the laying of every brick in every building, and into the leasing of those structures to theatrical managers, landlords, and shopkeepers, every one of whom trusts to luck for profitable results. The same spirit is written into every contract between actor and manager, and into all dealings with those keen-faced gentlemen who conduct business behind guarded doors and seldom show themselves in the streets until well into the afternoon.

Day and night the current of human life sweeps along Broadway and in and out of the side streets of the roaring forties, turning a bright face to the world and giving scant sign of the tragedy of wasted careers, broken hearts, and unfulfilled hopes that lies beneath the surface, dogging the weary feet of those who have dined with Fate and lost at the final throw.

At the edge of this gayly lighted, swift-paced district there stood for years a comfortable, old-fashioned hostelry known as the Colton House, of which it was often said that the clock stopped there early in the 'seventies. Its proprietor, Charley Colton, the second of his line, and his wife were of the old-fashioned American tavern-keeping

stock. Charley's father was the last New York landlord to keep a basket of apples on the corner of his bar, and Mrs. Colton had been born and reared in a famous New England hotel conducted by her father and mother for nearly half a century. She had dowered her husband with many of the ancient traditions by which hotel keeping in her native State had been guided in her young days, and regarded herself as Charley's partner as well as his lawful spouse. Inheriting her mother's well-earned reputation for "pizen neatness," she made the scrupulous care of the glass, linen, and silver her special duty, and was generally to be found, sewing in hand, in a small room back of the office from which she could see all that went on in the lobby. And neither professional gambler nor disreputable person could find lodgment beneath the Colton's roof.

The elder Colton had built well and durably, and installed in his house furniture and fixtures of such enduring workmanship that many of them were still in daily use at the time of his death. His son regarded with reverence every article that had come to him by inheritance, and none with greater respect than that treasured possession of every gray-haired boniface, his oldest guest. Somewhere—usually on the upper floor—of every time-stained house of call there has dwelt for years an individual of peaceful habit whom proprietor and clerks regard with just pride as a living evidence of the good cheer provided under the roof that lies so near his head. So averse is the landlord to dislodging him from his aerie that he is often allowed to remain long after he has ceased to pay. When the house is closed for a time the oldest guest continues to hold the fort with the connivance of the owners until a new tenant is found. When the building is torn down the house wrecker is frequently compelled to eject the oldest guest by main force

from the attic which he has shared with the rats and the roaches.

That Major Carleton was the oldest guest in the Colton House was but one of many reasons why he was held in high esteem by the proprietor and his wife. Neighborhood tradition asserted that his name stood at the top of the brand new register installed by Charley when, toward the end of his father's days, he assumed the management of the house and acquired its oldest guest. There had been times during the major's tenancy of the little room on the upper floor when his thick bank roll reposed in the office safe awaiting his call; there has been times, also, when Charley had told Davidson, the fat, bald day clerk, to "let the old gentleman's account stand for the present. He's always good for it." And no debt thus incurred by this model oldest guest was ever repudiated.

Major Carleton had been in his time as well known in the St. Charles in New Orleans, the Planters in St. Louis, and the Eutaw in Baltimore as he was now in the Colton House in New York. Of the best Southern blood, he had inherited from sport-loving forbears a taste for the turf, to which later experience had added a thorough knowledge of horse-flesh that enabled him to wrest a livelihood from the astute and unscrupulous manipulators of stables and betting rings. The many changes of fortune he had known in the course of his journey through a world, governed, as he firmly believed, by the laws of chance, had left behind them a calm, hopeful philosophy in which he accepted the dispensations of Providence without either bitter complaint or undue rejoicing.

And despite his lifelong association with the followers of the turf, the major had cherished in his heart the spirit of those ante-bellum days when play ran high and the fate of slaves and plantations hung on the turn of a card; when the line between the gentleman player and the professional gambler was so

sharply drawn that though the two might rub knuckles across the green cloth, and the dealer turn over the silver box or the player rise bankrupt from the table no further intimacy could follow

The goddess of chance who rules the destinies of this corner of New York, as every one living within its limits will cheerfully testify, must have smiled approvingly that May morning when Nelly de Forrest passed through the swinging doors of the Colton House, and shyly inquired of the oldest guest if the hotel was in need of a typist and stenographer. Her accent was unmistakably Southern; her dress neat but not of the latest fashion; and her manner different. Moreover there was a mute appeal in the sadness written on her delicate face and in her dark eyes that made an immediate appeal to the oldest guest, who, with a quick, appraising glance, rose from his seat and told her courteously that he would make inquiry at the office. She waited anxiously while he held colloquy with a fat and bald man behind a counter, and the latter, after a keen glance in her direction, summoned a stout, motherly looking woman from an inner office. The three consulted together for a moment and then, at a word from the old gentleman, the young applicant came forward and submitted timidly to the scrutiny of three pairs of eyes.

"Where have you worked?" inquired the motherly landlady in a tone of kindness that did not belie her appearance.

"Nowhere in New York, but I was two years in the bank in Memphis," she replied, adding, "I've only been here three weeks, and so far I haven't found anything to do. I peeked through the door and saw there was no stenographer here, so I thought perhaps you might like to employ me. I've been used to dictation, and can take letters very quickly and without making many mistakes."

There was silence for a moment during which the stranger felt that her fate hung in the balance, but there was a friendliness in the eyes turned toward her that encouraged her to continue:

"If you please, I shall be very grateful if you will try me. I find it difficult to get employment in such a huge city, and I have no friends to help me."

Her few words went straight to the understanding, motherly heart of Mrs. Colton, won the immediate good will of Davidson, the fat clerk, and the old gentleman she had first addressed, and procured for her the position she sought.

Previous occupants of the swivel chair into which Miss de Forrest now settled herself happily and gracefully had failed to satisfy the Coltons, in many instances because of their tendency to flirt with their patrons, and during the early period of her service the newcomer was carefully watched by two pairs of sharply critical and experienced eyes. This scrutiny ceased when Mrs. Colton remarked to the fat day clerk:

"That girl don't need any watching. She's all right."

"She's all right in one way," he responded, "but she needs watching all the same. She's the most innocent, unsophisticated creature to be found in this part of the town. I don't think she has any idea of what some of these people who dictate to her really are. I've had to give her one or two hints already, and she always minds what I say."

"I sometimes wonder," continued the landlady reflectively, "if she didn't leave a beau behind her when she came up from the South. It's not often you see a girl as pretty as she is who cares so little for men."

Davidson snorted contemptuously:

"You don't think a girl as high-toned as Miss de Forrest would give a second thought to those cheap actors and agents and tin-horn gamblers and Heaven knows what not who dictate their letters to her because they can't write

themselves? You can take it from me, Mrs. Colton, that any man who's lucky enough to win her will be of a different breed from such cattle."

Thereafter the eyes that kept watch and ward over the young stenographer, and of whose gaze she was entirely unaware, were kindly and alert. Equally watchful and solicitous for her welfare was the old gentleman to whom Nelly had spoken when she entered the lobby of the Colton House for the first time, and who had been instantly drawn to her as one of the caste in which he had been born and reared. Almost from that moment Major Carleton had assumed toward the young girl an attitude of unostentatious guardianship. Under the watchful eyes of these protectors, wise in the ways of a world whose sordid iniquity she was too innocent to suspect, she continued to take the dictation of theater folk, horse owners, and even gamblers without suffering by the daily association or acquiring any taint of speech or manner.

Miss de Forrest did more than take these letters; she improved many of them by tactful suggestions of a word or phrase, and, having a sentimental turn of mind, there was nothing she liked more than to be asked, as she frequently was, to supply the faltering tongue of the lovelorn with some fitting term of endearment. And to her friendly offices could be traced the happy outcome of more than one tangled affair of the heart.

It was she who composed and wrote the letter in which Williams, the colored head waiter, made known to Miss Elsie Johnson, the daughter of the wealthy Broad Street janitor, the state of his feelings. And it was common pantry talk that, but for Miss de Forrest's long-worded eloquence, Miss Johnson would not have left the employ of Clara Pinchbeck, the famous emotional actress whom she served in the double capacity of friend and maid, and become the

head waiter's wife. It was Miss de Forrest, too, who wrote the monthly letter that Mike, the night watchman, sent, together with a goodly part of his wages, to the old woman in Donegal. It was Miss de Forrest's sympathetic appeals, copied in a round, schoolboy hand by Tom Wilton, the erring and repentant horse owner, which reached the heart of his grievously offended wife in her father's home in Vermont and eventually drew her back to the husband whom she still loved and who loved her. In fact, scarcely anything of emotional interest happened under or near the roof of the Colton House that did not yield itself to the touch of her healing hand and the compelling charm of her kindly, unsullied, wholly gracious nature.

Not until Miss de Forrest had been a year in the Colton lobby did the watchful eye of the landlady detect in her any sign of an incipient interest in a member of the other sex. Six months before this George Merton had taken a room in the house, and during at least half of that time the young girl had taken his dictation almost daily. Young, good looking, and of a cheerful, breezy address that suggested the Western city from which he had come to New York in the hope of bettering his fortune, Merton made a good impression from the moment of his arrival on every one in the hotel. Mrs. Colton took to him on sight, and within a fortnight her husband told Davidson that it would be safe to cash the newcomer's check for any reasonable amount. It had not taken him long to establish himself in the real estate business, in which occupation he was displaying an industry and judgment that made his future success more than probable. The first inkling Mrs. Colton had of a growing attachment between the two came to her when Miss de Forrest asked her rather shyly one morning if she thought it would be imprudent for her to accept the young

man's invitation to dine and go to the theater.

More than once the major had given her a similar invitation, after first securing the landlady's approval, but this from a young unmarried man was something entirely new, and as Mrs. Colton gave a smiling and ready assent she wondered if the youth had any serious intentions, for the spectacle of growing intimacy between the two young persons of opposite sex never failed to act as a spark on the match-making tinder in that excellent woman's heart.

Later she remarked to Davidson:

"Well, she might do worse. He keeps a clean slate, and I've never seen him the worse for liquor. A little too fond of sitting in that Friday night poker game, but Charley says he takes his medicine like a gentleman when he loses."

"Which happens nine evenings out of ten," rejoined the clerk. "But there's gambling in the blood around here and it's hard to get away from it. Merton's on the level, all right, or I would have given her the office long ago to warn him off the course," he added.

Merton's devotion to the pretty stenographer soon became apparent to every one except the most affectionate of her friends. Fond as he was of her, Major Carleton remained unconscious of the intimacy. The truth was that of late the old gentleman's affairs had been a matter of concern to him as well as to Davidson, who feared that advancing age had dulled his once keen judgment of horseflesh, or that he was not keeping closely in touch with the most recent inventions in swindling practiced by bookmakers and horse owners. A lifelong believer in the fickle goddess of chance, his success in wresting a livelihood from the race track, despite the growing dishonesty of the racing fraternity, was a justification of his faith. For years it had been his custom to absent himself from New

York at irregular periods and "follow the ponies," as he expressed it, to Saratoga, New Orleans, and other places frequented by lovers of the turf. But now he showed signs of despondency and spent much of his time in his room or in aimless wandering through the neighborhood. One day a well-dressed man, whose steely eyes and clean-cut profile marked him as a professional gambler, called at the hotel and inquired for Major Carleton. Received in the latter's room, he remained for two hours, and after his departure the major appeared in the lobby, suit case in hand, and announced that business called him out of town for a few weeks. He settled part of his long overdue account and went away, muttering something about "following the ponies." He paused on his way out to say good-bye to Nelly, and the girl noticed he gave him her hand that he seemed more depressed than usual.

"It's a hard thing," he said, "man of my age to be obliged to pick living any way he can." And with that he was gone.

A month passed without news from the absent one, and Mrs. Colton was beginning to fear that some mishap had befallen him when her husband received a letter inclosing a postal order for a part of his debt, but with no information save that he was in good health and might soon pay his friends a brief visit. The note contained no address, but had been mailed from Baltimore. Davidson rather wondered at this, for there was no racing there at the time.

The same mail brought a letter for Nelly, written in a tremulous hand, and couched in language so tender, and with an underlying note of such sadness, that the tears coursed down her cheeks as she read it, just as they still course whenever she takes it out and reads the words she knows by heart. It is the only letter she ever received or ever will receive from the aged man

whose friendly offices and watchful care had meant so much to her. Like the other, it was written from Baltimore and without other address, and she could not help fearing that all was not going well with him. Long before his departure from the Colton House she had suspected that the years were weighing heavily on him, and that evil days were drawing near. Her keen feminine eyes had noted signs of poverty in his dress, neat as ever but worn almost to the point of shabbiness. More than once she had wished to relieve him from her own meager savings but did not dare offend him by offering what she knew he would not accept.

The old gentleman had often assured her that she might look to him for a handsome gift on the occasion of her marriage whenever that might occur, and it was the renewal of this promise in his letter that touched her so deeply, for she longed to tell him that she had just become engaged to George Merton, and that his blessing on the union was the only gift she wanted. Her tears would have flowed more freely could she have known what the major's present was to be and what it was to cost him. She had gone to Mrs. Colton that very morning, and, with flushed cheeks and eyes radiant with joy, told her the good news.

"I'm awfully glad for your sake, but we'll all hate to lose you," said that motherly creature as she kissed the girl affectionately and regarded her through eyes moist with tears. "George is all right and he'll make you a good husband, I've no doubt, but he's got a fault that you must break him of. He's a little too fond of play, and it will keep him poor all his life if you don't make him quit."

"I know that and so does George," she replied confidently; "and he's promised that after we're married he won't play for money."

"Then you've nothing to fear for he

is a man of his word," rejoined the other. "He's absolutely truthful, my husband says, and, if there is anybody in this town who knows what a liar is, it is Charley. There's one thing you must bear in mind and that is, for all your nice gentle ways and kind heart, you have a decided will of your own and so has George. Don't let those two wills clash or there'll be trouble."

"I've been afraid of that," rejoined the girl thoughtfully, "especially when I think of George's fondness for play. You can't think how I loathe and fear the vice of gambling," she continued, speaking very earnestly. "It cost my grandfather a great part of his fortune and ruined my father so that I had to go to work for my living. I'm going to talk very plainly to George about it."

She took early occasion to speak her mind to the young man in a manner he could not misunderstand, and shook her head doubtfully when he retorted that his promise would go into effect after the wedding but until that time he must be allowed a little license.

"How much money have you for the wedding and a little tour?" she inquired suddenly.

"Seven hundred and fifty bones, and we'll need it all. It would have been only six hundred if it hadn't been for a tip on the races old Davidson handed me one morning, so you must admit there's some good in taking a flyer now and then on a good thing."

"Very well," she replied, looking him steadily in the eyes. "You must show me seven hundred and fifty dollars the morning of our wedding or else there will be no wedding."

The young man laughed, but the girl looked very serious as she warned him that she meant what she had said, a fact that he could not doubt for he had already realized that, like many a sweet and gentle woman, she had a will as obstinate as his own. Looking into her fair eyes, there came into his mind the

old saying about the irresistible force coming into contact with the immovable object, and he felt that it would be dangerous to trifle with such determination as hers.

Another month passed without bringing further news of the major, and then an occasional patron of the hotel remarked to the head clerk as he stood chattering with him across the counter:

"That old sporting character who stops with you seems to have shifted his quarters. I saw him in Baltimore the other evening sitting in the lookout's chair in Doc Naegle's place. He looked fine, too, in his swallow-tail and white choker."

"The old gentleman always was a neat dresser," replied Davidson nonchalantly, but the other's words shocked and saddened him. From the first he had connected the major's mysterious disappearance with the visit of the man whom his experienced eye had told him must be a gamester, but he had not dreamed that the old sporting man whose name had long stood for square dealing could be induced to renounce his principles and become a dealer in a gambling house.

"What's this about Major Carleton?" asked Merton who was standing near by.

"Saw him in Baltimore the other day," responded the other. "He's dealing for Doc Naegle. Got an interest in the game, they say, and coining money."

"That is a comedown," remarked George sympathetically, for he was well aware of the old man's abhorrence of gamblers. "However," he added, "I'll bet they won't get him to turn a crooked card. But even if he's square to the last, it puts him in another class—at least so far as I'm concerned. All my life I've drawn the line between gentlemen and professional faro dealers, every one of whom is crooked. Well, I'm awfully sorry for the old man."

One morning a few weeks later Major Carleton entered the lobby and greeted

Davidson with his old-time courtesy though his face was paler than usual and the hand he extended trembled slightly as if from age. He settled the balance of his debt from a thick roll of bills and stuffed the remainder into his pocket. Then, observing that the clerk wore a dignified frock coat adorned with a boutonnière of white rosebuds, he said:

"What's going on here? Looks like a wedding."

"Of course it is," was the reply. "You're back just in time to see Miss de Forrest spliced in the boss' room at one and sit down at the wedding breakfast the old lady's arranging. We all want to see that she gets a proper send-off."

He indicated as he spoke the white chrysanthemums in the coats of the colored bell boys, and added in a low, confiding voice:

"The boys bought those on their own account. I guess Miss de Forrest has been writing their love letters free of charge."

Through the half open door of the smaller of the two dining rooms, Williams, the colored head waiter, could be seen putting the final touches of ornament to a table bright with silver, fruit, and flowers. The major's lively sense of something unusual was increased when he turned to the stenographer's desk and found it occupied by some one he had never seen before.

Ashamed of the calling into which he had been driven in his old age in order to earn his bread and pay his few debts, Major Carleton had so effectually concealed his whereabouts that no tidings of Nelly de Forrest's engagement had reached his ears, and Davidson's words were not only a surprise but a staggering shock, for they told him that the girl from his own South whom he had loved unselfishly and fondly was now lost to him forever. He did not even know whom she was to marry, but a

sudden jealousy of the man, whoever he might be, took possession of his soul.

The emotions of undisciplined youth, its fierce loves and fiercer hates, have served poet and novelist since time began, but the calm, enduring, less selfish love of old age is a theme seldom touched upon. Nor does the jealous rage that springs into being when paternal affection finds a rival in handsome, all-conquering youth appear worthy of serious consideration in the eyes of those who earn their living by portraying humanity. Fortunate, indeed, is such love when it escapes downright ridicule.

"Why, major," continued the clerk, "do you mean to say you were not wise to what was going on between our fair stenographer and young Merton?"

So it was this pushing young business man who had stolen what was more precious to him than anything else he possessed, save only the reputation for square dealing he had so carefully preserved. That good name was all that remained to him after a life spent in the service of the fickle goddess who had turned her back on him at the last. And how long would he have that, if it became known that he had discarded all his old principles and was dealing faro for Doc Naegle in his Baltimore gambling house? But of what was passing in his mind the major's face gave no sign, and it was in an apparently cheerful spirit that he took the letters awaiting him and remarked:

"Well, I was not quite blind to the affair."

Seated in his accustomed chair near the door, the old gentleman began to open his letters, but, try as he would, he could not think of anything save the loss he had sustained. A whole year of unspoken love and silent, watchful devotion swept into oblivion by a few weeks of ardent courtship! There was bitter humiliation in the realization of this quick victory of vigorous youth over impotent age, and there arose in his

heart a jealousy of the victor that for the moment drove out all other feelings. His next thought was of an appropriate wedding gift, and he hastily counted the bills still remaining to him and realized sadly that he could not afford as costly a present as he would like. Meanwhile he would try to conquer the envy he was ashamed of, and he rose to his feet, picked up his suit case, and started for his own room. At the door of the elevator he found himself face to face with the object of his jealousy.

"Glad to see you back, major. Another day and you would have been too late for the wedding and that would have broken Nelly's heart!" cried George in his friendliest manner for he had been fond of the old man from the first and would ignore his fall into the professional class. "Come up to my room and have a little drink in honor of the day," he continued. With the younger man's hand on his shoulder the major entered the elevator, trying to voice his good wishes in a tone of sincerity, hard though the task was.

As the two touched glasses the idea came to the younger of them that it might be possible for him to win the hundred or more he so earnestly desired by means of a brief game with this man whom he still believed to be absolutely square, gambler though he was. Equally firm in his faith in the unwritten law of the goddess of chance, which ordains that one must take advantage of the rising flood of good fortune, he felt fully justified in risking a part of his hoard in an attempt to increase it.

"Major," he said, "you and I have sat in a good many poker games first and last, and I thought we might have a few hands of freeze out before I quit for good. I've given Nelly my word that after we're married I won't touch a card or a dicebox or play the races, and I'm going to keep my word. But I've got an hour of freedom left. What do you say?"

"That's the kind of proposition an old sporting man finds it hard to refuse," rejoined the other pleasantly.

George threw a pack of cards on the table, remarking rather boastfully:

"I don't mind telling you that the luck has been running pretty strong with me of late, so you'd better watch out. Deal first, if you please."

"You certainly are in luck to-day, luck that should last all your life," rejoined the other as he shuffled the cards. He spoke with his customary grave courtesy, nor did his face give sign of the jealousy gnawing at his heart, and further aroused by the touch of arrogance in the young man's voice. At the same time there came into his mind the thought that there would be some satisfaction in winning from this exuberant and self-confident youth sufficient money to purchase a handsome piece of jewelry for his bride. Knowing himself to be an infinitely better card player than the other, he felt sure that he was actuated by a not unworthy motive when he entered into the game. Still further was he justified when Merton placed a large wad of bills on the table and remarked exultingly:

"I want you to notice that I've got a roll like a telegraph pole, and I'm not afraid to bet it. The fact is, I'm a natural born card player for I've got card sense and that's half the battle. Do you remember the night I took a clean hundred and fifty away from you and Colton?"

"I certainly do recall that event," replied the other blandly, remembering also other Friday evenings when the young man's luck had been quite different.

Major Carleton's friends were wont to declare that, as a poker player, he had no equal among the limited sporting class that never resorted to cheating. In his early days he had played on Mississippi steamboats, then regarded as an education in itself. In his later years

when he owned and raced thoroughbreds he had sat in countless games that acknowledged no limit save the blue sky, and had won and lost without indicating on his face either triumph or discomfiture. His knowledge of cards was proverbial, but he possessed a still greater knowledge of the human countenance and could read on it signs and portents invisible to others. When he lost it was either through heedlessness or failing to read those signs and portents aright.

Now his jealousy of the young man opposite him was heightened by the latter's boastfulness, and he shuffled and dealt the first hand in a spirit of grim determination to teach him a useful lesson.

"I'll play for just half an hour and no longer," said Merton. "After that I've got to quit and get ready for the wedding."

Major Carleton watched him closely as he picked up his own hand and bestowed a careless glance on it. For several minutes they played for small stakes and George won steadily.

"I'm going to turn my winnings over to the little girl just to show her that I don't always lose when I play, especially when she brings me the luck," he observed confidently.

"Always give your winnings to her," rejoined the other, adding to himself, "if you have any to give."

Little did the simple-minded youth suspect that his quiet, smooth-spoken opponent had been subjecting him to the closest sort of scrutiny from the moment when he noted his first glance at his cards. Nor had he observed the more experienced gamester's manner of studying his own hand as if judging its possibilities before making his bid. To neither of the two was the game interesting until a sudden light in Merton's eye as he took up his cards, and an obviously assumed indifference in his voice as he called for one more, in-

licated to the major the strength of his hand, which he wisely judged to be four of a kind. After a moment's hesitation he drew two, remarking in his soft Southern voice:

"I don't mind telling you that I have some nice cyards here with pictures on them."

"Then bet on them!" exclaimed George, and the two men raised one another, the one excitedly, the other calmly, until the younger, noting the size of the pot and the unruffled demeanor of his opponent, asked him if he did not intend to call.

"No," replied the major; "with these cyards I'm holding it would be a sin to call. I couldn't look these pretty pictures in the face and do such a thing as that."

"Then I'll call," he said, turning over the cards he had left lying face down on the table. "What have you got? I have four kings."

"Four kings are quite good," rejoined the major pleasantly; "I have only four queens." He glanced at the exposed hand and then exclaimed: "Hold on! One of those kings is a jack!"

The loser bore his mortification with apparent good nature, but there was a pallor in his cheeks and a tightening of his jaw that told of his real feelings. He played more carefully now for several deals and then surprised the other by standing pat while the latter called for three cards, evidently drawing to a pair. Again the betting ran high and again it was Merton who called, remarking with a brave assumption of light-hearted confidence:

"Can you beat three aces?"

"Ten full on queens does it," was the reply.

From the time when George began to play cards, which was in his nineteenth year, he had prided himself on what he termed his sporting blood, a quality that enabled him to accept defeat without a murmur. Toward the opponent

who won by fair means he entertained no animosity, but the mere suspicion of cheating roused him to fury. Therefore he gave no sign of dismay at sight of the four queens, and it was in a perfectly calm voice that he said:

"I guess I've had enough." He pushed back his chair.

As he began to unroll his money the major noticed that although the outside bill was a hundred dollar one the others were all of much smaller denomination, so that when the winnings had been paid only a small amount of currency remained. Evidently, thought the major, the young man had been bluffing when he compared his wad with a telegraph pole. Silently Merton rose from his chair and stood looking out of the window, his back turned toward the table where the major still sat with the money lying before him. He spoke no word of complaint but his whole attitude suggested despondency. Could it be, the major asked himself with sudden dismay, that the sum he had staked so bravely would interfere with his wedding plans? Were that the case, what would Nelly say when she learned that the man who had claimed to be her friend had won the money that meant so much to them both?

"See here, Merton," he exclaimed; "I don't want your money. You will need every cent of it now. Let's pretend we were just playing for fun."

"No, sir," interrupted Merton, "I don't care to benefit by the baby act. I'm no piker and I'm no squealer. I can take my medicine."

"Nonsense, boy," said the old man. "Take your money back and give me your I O U for the whole amount, and we'll call it a loan."

"I don't borrow money from those I play with," retorted George. "In all my life I have never disregarded a gambling obligation or accepted a compromise, and I've expected those I played with to do the same by me."

That's the only way a man can keep his self-respect in this town."

"Nonsense," remonstrated the other. "I'm mighty well pleased with the spirit you show, but there's some one else interested in this matter. What will she say—the girl you're going to marry?"

"No," said George obstinately; "I've got to take my medicine, no matter how bitter it is. That's part of my code. I shall tell Nelly all about it and she must do as she pleases. So long as the game was on the level I must abide by the result. And I don't forget that I was playing with square Major Carleton."

"Then it's all because I'm called a square sport that you won't accept a little favor from me?" inquired the old man.

"That's my code," said George. "I was cheated once by a fellow who marked the edges of the high cards with his fingernail and when I found it out I went back to the clubroom, demanded my money, and got it."

He turned again to the window and stood looking out into the little courtyard with its gray flagstones, its dog kennel and labyrinth of clotheslines, and wondered how he should tell the story of his fall to the girl whom he loved. It was a tall, well-knit figure that he presented to the gaze of the old man who sat with his arms resting on the table, watching the youthful gamester. The boy had lived up to his code of honor, and the major felt a new respect for him.

"My boy," he said gently, "you've shown that you're neither piker nor squealer and I admire your pride and good principles, so don't let such a trifling matter as a few queens stand in the way of your happiness and the girl's. And mine, too, for that matter, for when she learns the truth she'll never forgive me and I'll never forgive myself. Take your money and pay me when you please—that is, if you insist."

"I don't wish to hurt your feelings," said George, "but I happen to know that you've dropped down from my class and taken to faro dealing. I simply cannot accept a money favor from a professional gambler." Then, seeing the other wince, he went on in kindlier tones: "Of course I do not insinuate that you are a crooked gambler like the rest of the fraternity, but you are a gambler and I can't accept your money."

The words were like a blow in the face to the old man and he staggered under it, though outwardly calm. So the fact that he had made the irretrievable plunge from the caste of the gentleman to that of the outcast had become known to his friends in New York! Of the laws laid down by the first Colton and religiously observed by his son none was more sacred than that which forbade the harboring of a professional gambler beneath the roof of the hotel bearing his honored name. In an instant there flashed across his mind a picture of his summary ejection from the house that had been his home for a third of a century and in which he had enjoyed the esteem and friendship of the Coltons, not only as their oldest boarder but as a gentleman of the almost obsolete class of racing men of known probity. Above all was it the house in whose lobby he had come to know the girl whose future happiness now rested in the hollow of his hand.

Remembrance of Nelly de Forrest drove from his heart the dross of bitter, unreasoning, unworthy envy and left only the pure gold of unselfish resolve to serve her by a sacrifice of everything that remained to him after a life of servitude to the false and fickle goddess of chance. It should be his wedding gift, the costliest one she was likely to receive. Whatever kindly memory of him she might cherish would be tainted by the knowledge of what he had done on her wedding day. He glanced

at her affianced husband standing at the window gazing gloomily down at the little gray courtyard, and he hesitated no longer.

The cards were still lying on the table. Swiftly and stealthily he seized the four queens and nicked the edge of each one with his finger nail. He had known of many packs similarly marked, but it was the first time he had ever done the marking. For a moment he paused; he had raised the cup of bitterness to his lips but his soul revolted at thought of draining it to the lees. Then with a queer catch in his voice he said:

"Young gentleman, I can't rob you on her marriage day. Have a look at those winning cards and then take your money."

Merton swung round and seized the cards in hands that shook with excitement. A swift glance at the four queens lying uppermost on the pack told him that the major had confessed his guilt.

"By Heaven, you're all alike" he cried as he hurled the cards to the floor and faced the old man with doubled fist. "They all say you're the last of your kind but I guess I'm the last of my kind—the last one alive who'd trust a card sharper. It's nothing but your age that saves you from being killed where you sit for what you've made me suffer these last few minutes."

Major Carleton did not know what physical fear meant but he winced visibly under the brutal words. He looked his accuser calmly in the eye and said:

"Take your money; it belongs to you."

"Square Major Carleton!" hissed the

young man with a bitter contempt in his voice that almost brought the other to his feet; "how long have you been doing this sort of thing?"

The major raised his right hand as he made answer in level voice:

"As God is my witness, never before to-day; never after to-day. You never would have found out if I had not done the square thing by you, and I did that on account of the little girl. I couldn't possibly hurt her on this day of all others. If I'd kept your money, it would have gone into a wedding gift, so I gave her the only thing I have left in the world and that was the name you've called me by—square Major Carleton. You're the first man who ever used that term with a sneer in his voice, but we'll let that pass. I've got one thing to ask you. Don't let that little girl know what my gift to her was. Neither she nor you will ever know how much it cost."

George Merton looked fixedly at the old Southerner, noting the signs of suffering in his gray face and faded blue eyes and the pleading in his voice.

"All right," he said, speaking more gently; "Nelly shall never know, but this will have to be good-by for all time."

It was with visible effort that the major rose to his feet and stood for a moment resting his hand on the table for support. He seemed to have aged perceptibly within ten minutes. He bowed with old-fashioned courtesy and said:

"Thank you." Then he passed out of the room.



IT isn't the color of a girl's hair or the texture of her skin that is foremost," says Flo Ziegfeld, defining beauty. "It is her personal charm of manner, her approach, her smile, her tout ensemble. Physique is an attribute, but a girl must also possess a spirit of jolliness, happiness, light-heartedness—and sometimes indifference." It sounds simple, but try to follow it.

A Piece of Furniture

By Ethel Watts Mumford

Author of "Good Night Nurse,"

"Easy Money," etc.



MRS. Y. LYONS PHILMORE was famous for her income, her profanity, her ugliness, and her secretary. Perhaps the roster should read: income, secretary, profanity, ugliness. True it was that the secretary created more talk even than the millions, but as these, by common consent, were the reason of the secretary, plainly they should take precedence.

He was quite the most beautiful thing in secretaries to be obtained. Six feet two, good looking enough to star in the cinema, well educated, a gentleman to finger tips and topmost curl, and twenty-six years of age—twenty-six, that is, when he was acquired by Mrs. Y. Lyons Philmore. He had been her devoted slave for three gossip-filled years, and if he ever regretted his serfdom, he certainly gave no hint of it. The magnificence of his surroundings suited him. It was his natural background.

As he leaned on the marble balustrade of the turreted, crenelated castle, called by his patroness her country house, one gorgeous day in June, and gazed out over the sapphire ocean, he was inwardly and outwardly beaming. His clothes fitted him; his valet suited him better than any he'd had since valets had become a necessity. Hermione had just presented him with a racing car he'd been coveting; there was an amazing crowd at the house for the week-end,

and the new brand of cigarettes he was trying were quite to his taste.

A servant crossed the wide paved esplanade before the house and came up behind him.

"Yes, Links? What is it?" the darling of Fate roused himself to inquire.

"Madame would like to speak with you in the library, sir."

"I'll be there immediately." He controlled a sigh. Hermione had been irritable of late, a bit trying; but the car was worth a little extra patience. He threw away the cigarette stub as he entered the portal and strode down the great renaissance hall to the door of the library. He knocked and opened, entering with a light step and a glowing smile.

"Up early, Hermy," he breezed. "What's the good word?"

The bright morning light was not becoming to the lady. Her piercing black eyes were circled with purple. Her rough skin showed the blotches of paint and powder. One eyebrow had been made up far heavier than the other. Her mouth was puckered in a myriad of wrinkles, like a purse top drawn too tight by its string. Her sports suit was the color of a mustard plaster, and her hair, a purple auburn, was a complete discord.

"Sit down, Dennis," she commanded.

He knew he was in wrong. She usually called him "Dinny lad" in their

private and more intimate conversations. He took a chair at the other side of the wide, carved table, and continued to grin. She did not thaw out.

"What a mess you've made," she snarled, her small bulldog nose wrinkling; "what a mess!"

"Meaning?" he inquired meekly.

"I told you to get a lot of social debts paid off this month, but I didn't tell you to make me up a house party of family rows. Look at 'em: the Hemmings, fighting like cat and dog; the Findleys and Priestley—couldn't you leave Findley out if you were going to ask his wife and Priestley? It disgusts everybody the way he shuts his eyes to what's as plain as daylight—the Tuckers, the prize hopheads; and Susan Collenge, the gold-medal gossip; the Pedar twins! My word! I couldn't believe my eyes when I looked over your list yesterday."

He leaned across the table and touched her hand.

"Don't you scold me like that; aren't you wise? This is going to be a three-ring circus. I did it on purpose. Want to see the wheels go round; little diversion, what?"

"Well," she said, relenting slightly, "you'll have to take Susan in hand and keep her quiet."

"I'll compromise Susan, if you say the word, so she won't dare say 'boo' about any of 'em."

She looked at him reproachfully.

"We've got to live through it, I suppose, but I've a mind to send word I've got glanders, or something, and stay in my own wing."

"A lot you would. You'd die if you couldn't hear the menagerie howl," he laughed.

"And what did you ask that Hartridge girl for? She's only a child, and she'll be lost in this crowd."

"I asked her because I like to look at her," he answered. "She's a fine stage prop, and, besides, she's a social debt, isn't she? Didn't Mrs. Cowdin send

her to you with all sorts of letters? My word, Hermy, you don't appreciate me; honest, you don't. This is quite the nicest party I ever planned for you, and you grouch!"

"What are you going to do with 'em to-day?" she asked.

"Yacht; didn't you see her at the pier? I want 'em where they'll have to be all together. It'll be no end of fun."

"I was a fool to let you take charge. I blame myself; I ought to know you by this time."

"You certainly should. Oh, come on, loosen up; you're not responsible for any row, and I'm the goat. You can have the fun without any responsibility."

She sighed.

"You're a terrible boy; you'll never grow up."

He leaned over the table and patted her hand again. Under her rough, lined skin the blood mounted.

"Everything is all arranged," he told her. "You just sit back and applaud the show. We're to go aboard at eleven, run a couple of hours, then lunch; in for a swim at Coralie's; take her crowd on for dinner; moonlight—all that sort of thing. Animals always howl loudest at the full of the moon, don't you get it? Fun, what?"

"Your idea of fun is something ghastly," she observed, but she smiled in spite of herself.

"Who's on the yacht—cook, I mean? The Japs?"

He nodded.

"Well, tell Férand to go aboard. If I've got to eat with your menagerie, at least I'll eat well, so I'll not growl with them. Are they all down?"

"Most of 'em. They're all dolled up for the yo-heave-ho. Wait till you see Susan."

"Humph!" she jeered; "wait till you hear Susan, that's all. Well, if they're yo-heave-hoing, I shan't. I shall go aboard as is——"

"Disguised as a mustard plaster!" he giggled impudently.

She did not know whether to laugh or get angry.

"Well, a mustard plaster's a good drawing card, isn't it?" she retorted, and waved dismissal.

Dennis sauntered out and across the hall to the breakfast room, where, English fashion, those of the guests who did not prefer coffee in their bedroom could drop in and refresh themselves at any hour they found appetite calling. The coffee urn simmered on a high "hunting" sideboard. In their hot-water dishes under capacious covers, bacon and eggs and toast awaited. The men of the party were congregated by the opened French windows smoking cigarettes, and gallantly surrounding the only woman present—the little Hart-ridge girl. Her slim, white-clad figure looked as fresh as the morning. Her gold hair shone about her head like a halo. The pink-and-whiteness of her skin had the delicate, rose-leaf perfection that no cosmetic can give.

Dennis, his hands in his pockets, observing the group in silent amusement, decided she was, without doubt, his most ornamental guest. She was as a lighted brand thrown amidst the tinder of men wearied of their wives. Tucker was beaming at her; Findley was lighting her a cigarette; Priestly was reading her palm—rather matutinal for that pastime. Dennis grinned. What would Deliah Findley say if she could see both her husband and her admirer now?

Dennis joined the group.

"Case of first up best addressed, is it?"

The girl turned to him, her eyes of forget-me-not blue fastening to his with a personal and unspoken greeting while her lips answered lightly:

"I'm an early bird. Just look at my worms."

The worms applauded, but Dennis, his eyes on hers, was unaware of what

her lips had said. Suddenly, miraculously, something had happened to him, something that left him breathless and amazed, his heart pounding. Never in all his spoiled existence had he been in love. He had been the quarry always, never the hunter. The ease of his conquests left him coldly critical, flattered, a bit grateful. But now, suddenly, nothing mattered except this slim, golden-haired, forget-me-not-eyed girl-woman. The emotion was so strong that he turned away, trying to make his walk an indifferent saunter as he passed by them and onto the landward garden terrace. He gripped the rim of the gigantic olla at the top of the steps to steady himself. The bay tree it contained quivered with the strength of his grip and the shaking of his hand.

"Good Lord!" he whispered under his breath. And what, he thought in a flash of realization, had he to offer her? It had gone as far as that in the twinkling of an eye. What had he to offer? What, indeed? He hadn't a penny saved from his salary. It costs to be the private secretary of a millionaire widow. He couldn't be a piker. Suppose he chucked it? Of course, he'd have to chuck it. Then what? What was he fitted for? To be the private secretary of some other millionaire—that, and nothing else. Then his youth and the knowledge of his own good looks and charm came to his rescue. He was Dennis Tremayne, wasn't he? *The* Dennis Tremayne that every woman tried to gain a smile from. Was she any different from the rest, this Barbara Hartridge? Then the idealism that had never before awakened in his heart spoke up. Of course she was different—innocent, lovely, young.

The turmoil within him stilled suddenly as he heard the voice of the hostess behind him.

"Good morning, everybody. Here come Flo and Deliah. Well, I'll say it's about time. It's after ten now, and we

ought to be on our way by eleven sharp. Well, Barb, you'll not take those shoes on my deck, if you please."

"Oh, no," Barbara Hartridge answered; "I'll have myself insulated before I tread your deck."

Mrs. Philmore joined her secretary. Her eyes were soft as she took in the fine outline of his athletic back against the green tangle of the hedges and the blush of the rose garden.

He felt her presence nearing and his flesh crawled. She looked up at him.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "You don't look well. Too much champagne last night?"

He nodded, grasping at the excuse, wondering that his inner distress should make itself so visible.

"Run along, and tell Homes to get you a cold pint, boy, with a dash of bitters. Sorry I scolded so," she added in an undertone. "I didn't realize you felt seedy."

"Thanks, Hermione," he answered dully. "I'll just do that little thing. I need a bracer." She turned back to the breakfast room.

"How long have you been up?" Priestly asked her.

She helped herself from a bowl of cigarettes.

"Since dawn, my dear chap. If you think this place doesn't need some administering, you're mistaken, though Dennis is responsible for getting it done. I'm all out of Mex Pete," she added; "didn't like the look of the market. You were in pretty deep. Are you staying with it?"

"No, got out Thursday. Trust you to get wise," he added admiringly.

"Of course—hum—I see the blue eyes of infancy have their effect even on you."

Priestly actually blushed, and the bulldog nose of his hostess wrinkled with suppressed mirth.

"Does she know you've a wife in the asylum and can't get a divorce?" she

whispered, watching his reactions sardonically, a hint of evil merriment in the turn of her lip.

"Heavens, Hermione," he replied angrily; "one doesn't go into that sort of thing on a few hours' acquaintance."

Priestly, glanced anxiously over his shoulder at Deliah Findley.

"And should Deliah fail, of course, there's Susan. Why spread the bad news oneself?" she continued.

"Quite so," he agreed. "Tell me about her."

"Who? Susan?"

"Hang Susan! Go on. Who, what, and why is *she*?"

"Poor and ambitious," she generalized. "Her mother was Claire Madderly; run-away match with a riding master; both dead. Some of her mother's friends have taken her up; gave her an opportunity to get out into the great world and meet some undesirable men, like you. Pretty little thing, but there's a bad streak in the Madderlys. So you see, don't spoil the poor child's chance for a good match by taking up her time."

"Well, at that, I can't see that this bunch you've got here is going to give her a debutante's chance; lot of married mix-ups," he sneered.

"Dennis invited 'em," she explained.

"Oh, Dennis." He flashed a swift look. "Aren't you taking chances with that beautiful piece of furniture?"

"My secretary, you mean?" she said placidly. "Not at all. He's too much in love with himself, the dear boy."

"And too grateful to you." It was his turn to banter on dangerous ground.

"Naturally," she countered. "I wanted a handsome piece of furniture, as you express it, and I bought it; but I've seen to it, also, that it has been properly cared for and excellently placed. If a secretary is left out in the rain and cold it gets cracked—quite so. Deliah is giving me a very harsh look. I think she fears my fascinations. Bet-

ter talk to her, or she'll sue me for alienation."

"For the love of Heaven, let up on Deliah!" he grumbled.

"I'm going to send after the rest of them," she said as she turned toward the door. "If they aren't on board at eleven, they get left, that's all." With a curt nod she turned away.

Priestly obediently joined Deliah.

"Hermione has the taste of an Abyssinian," she snapped. "All she needs is a knuckle-bone necklace." She smoothed back her own satiny black bandeau. "Nobody has any right to look like that at this hour of the morning. Imagine an eyeful of that with a hang-over! Ugh!"

"But did you see that square emerald ring she was wearing? It was so beautiful that I didn't even see what sort of a frock she had on."

It was the little Hartridge girl who spoke, and Priestly cast her one of his sharp, diagnosing glances under his heavy, lizardlike lids.

They were not allowed to discuss their hostess further, for that lady, returning, proceeded to herd them out.

Accompanied by servants with wraps, swimming bags, and accessories, the party descended to the lower hall, passed under a portcullis, and out upon a stone quay, at the farther end of which the *Chinook* lay moored. The screws churned the blue waters to a semblance of milk and vichy, as Mrs. Phil described it, and the trim white craft headed northward into the blue and crystal of a wind-swept morning.

The wicker chairs under the after awning soon filled with their quota of weary-eyed pleasure seekers, for last night's cards had lasted till dawn. The Pedar twins, as dissimilar as twins can often be, looked positively jaded beside the clear freshness of Barbara. Mrs. Henning and Deliah Findley wisely resorted to white veils, and Susan Colingwood, having nothing to worry

about in the way of looks, being quite devoid of anything but body and features, had clad the former in tailored serge, and left her features to the elements. Hermione looked over her guests. Her annoyance had given place to the suggestion Dennis had given her: they were there to amuse her ironical whim. Here was every kind of acid; some sort of explosion was due. Henning was smitten by the dark twin, and his wife liked Findley; but Findley was too busy being jealous of Deliah even to see it. Poor Findley: such a dub.

A cool breeze played across the spotless decks and shook the gay awnings; the sun sparkled on varnished mahogany and brass work. The zizz, as of pouring champagne overside, sang through the purring of the screw. Their quarrels and love-making for the moment stilled, the ill-assorted guests sank into silent comfort. For half an hour or more peace hovered over the flying ship. Then peace fell behind.

Hermione was restless. Where was Dennis? She rose and entered the main saloon, a place of chintz and painted furniture that suggested anything but the sea. A Japanese steward was busy with a cocktail tray; and the silver ship's clock was threatening twelve. "The sun over the yardarm" would bring the first revivifying drink of the day. A glance in the cabin always reserved for him showed that her secretary was not there; neither was he in the pantry; the chart house harbored only the sailing master. Then she caught sight of him perched alone on the bowsprit, his long legs gangling, his feet on the catharpins.

She never failed to thrill at the sight of him. Everything she owned: her Chinese porcelains, her horses, her bull terriers, her cars, and emeralds, were show specimens. Physically, at least, Dennis was a perfect specimen of the genus homo. She was inordinately proud of possessing him. It annoyed

her at times to realize that there was something maternal in her feeling for him.

He was more than himself to her. He had come to be a symbol of her power. He was her flaunted defiance, her human declaration of impertinence, her gauge of battle flung down that none dared take up and make an issue.

As she looked at him her first quiver of admiration and survey of pride in his beauty turned to sudden intuitive fear. She drew a quick, painful breath.

"Dinny lad," she called softly.

He started violently at the sound of her voice, and the blood rushed to his face, flooding it to the crisp waves of his heavy blond hair.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "You nearly made me fall off. What are you trying to do!"

She came forward swiftly, hurt to the quick by his tone.

"Why, dear boy, don't—what is it? Do you still feel badly?"

He swung inboard resignedly.

"Seedy; bit of a headache. What's the matter? The menagerie boring you?"

"No, Dinny." She laughed shortly. "But I can't risk Susan's going around saying *you're* bored."

He walked beside her moodily. Again her intuition warned her of danger. She glanced at him sharply. As they reached the after deck cocktails were being served, and the first couple to attract their eyes was Barbara Hart-ridge and Priestly leaning against the rail, her right arm hooked through his left, an eye-to-eye toast in progress. Hermione felt rather than saw Tremayne shiver, but, knowing his dislike of Priestly, was unsurprised. She did not wonder, therefore, at her secretary's quick movement as he broke the elbow hold laughingly and whirled the girl away from her partner.

The party was more animated now; the anteluncheon stimulant revived

jaded appetites and heavy wits. The chatter became general. The Hennings began to quarrel in low tones—so low that Susan Collingwood had to change her seat to hear. Sombra Pedar dragged out a pogo stick and dared Findley to a bout with her. Deliah had crossed to Priestly and took no pains to conceal her ill temper. Dennis and Barbara, their backs to the others, hung over the rail. To his own surprise Tremayne heard himself saying:

"Priestly's a boulder, Barb. Cut him out, will you?"

Barbara was startled by the intimacy of the tone and the frankness of the criticism. She flashed a glance at him, but her voice was chill as she answered:

"Do you think it's good form to criticize your—I mean, Mrs. Philmore's guests?"

He winced.

"No, I don't. I think it's rotten of me," he replied. "I beg your pardon for butting in."

She looked at him again. He was a gorgeous-looking person, she decided. Her sophisticated mind traveled back over the gossip heard. She wondered if he were making a good thing out of it; wondered, too, why it was said of him that he never looked at a woman, though they all ran after him. It couldn't possibly be that he was actually crazy about Mrs. Phil. However, his present attention to herself was a feather in her cap. But was it wise to flaunt it? The friendship of the eminent dowager was as greatly to be desired as her enmity was to be dreaded.

Barbara decided that she must watch herself. She could maneuver, she felt sure, so that she might lead Dennis on and still evade censure; a little love-making—why not? Ah, well, one couldn't have everything. She envied those girls, who, like the Pedar twins, were so wealthy that they could buy themselves any husband they fancied—even some one else's.

She had been silent so long that Dennis felt cold fear.

"You're not offended, are you?" he begged.

She smiled at him.

"Offended? No; why?" she asked innocently.

He stammered like a schoolboy.

"My presuming to—to warn you? I—you see, you're really almost a stranger. No, I don't mean that; but you don't know all the ins and outs of the lives of this crowd. What I mean is—well, Priestly's married; got a wife in the asylum. He's got no business making love to a girl like you. Oh, my Lord! what a cad I am!"

She gave him the soft caress of her eyes.

"Thank you for feeling like that, just the same. Oh, dear, luncheon's being announced. I wonder if I'm to sit by you. Wouldn't that be nice!"

"It would," he said, offering her his arm with mock formality. "But I bet it is not to be, alas!" he murmured as he found himself separated from Barbara by the full width of the table.

Dennis was in a turmoil. Frightened at the violence of his emotions, he took refuge in noise. His hilarious gayety caused even Mrs. Philmore to raise her eyebrows.

"Have you," Henning remarked caustically, "caught up with your hang-over, Tremayne? I heard you calling for champagne this glad a. m."

Dennis subsided like a pricked balloon. Barbara might believe this infernal inference. She would be shocked. His anger rose at Henning and Claire.

"Do I laugh so seldom that it seems odd to you?" His tone was suddenly offended.

The hostess came to his rescue.

"Stop picking on Dennis," she ordered. "It's a good thing somebody's rolling the ball. Look at Deliah, there; she's a whole thundercloud. What's your trouble, my dear?"

Deliah's black eyes flashed.

Susan Collingwood's lips twitched.

"Do you know," she said softly, "that the Baseleys are getting a divorce? They say she's crazy about Welles Stuart. Well, I've always said, 'Better on with the new love before you are off with the old.' Then you know where you're going when you're on your way." She grinned meaningly at Findley, who glowered at her.

"How have you managed your affairs, Susan?" Mrs. Philmore snapped.

"I always tell the truth to my husband or my lover or my friend," she said sententiously. "It's simpler."

Dennis glanced at Barbara. He wished her a thousand miles away, out of this environment. What must she think? It was a shame that these people would not curb their conversation before this innocent girl. He longed to tell them so. What were they anyhow? A lot of spineless, overfed loafers! He hated them. Luncheon over, he tried to monopolize Barbara once more, but found it impossible. Was she avoiding him? Why? Because he had criticized Priestly? Rotten bad form; she had said as much. She thought him the cad he had called himself. Somehow he must manage to square himself. But she gave him no opportunity.

He was jealous, in blinding flashes of pain. His need of her grew in leaps and bounds as he watched her, and with it a worship such as he had never known. Seeing only with the eyes of sudden love, he misjudged her with the completeness of infatuation. He was only vaguely conscious that Hermione's piercing eyes were on him. The note of warning in his voice went unheeded.

The day dragged by. They anchored off Coralie Cachot's Bosphorion palace, went for a swim with the chatelaine and her party; partook of caviar and champagne highballs; disported themselves with the conventional unconventionality of their kind; and all the while, save

for a smile or a glance, Dennis found his pursuit of Barbara blocked.

The sun sank into waters of gold and amethyst as the anchor was raised and the ship once more in motion, heading toward the mauve horizon, above which hung the moon. But there was no peace in that lovely hour for Dennis Tremayne. He hung over the rail, apparently absorbed in the sunset, and was surprised to find the man by his side to be Jeff Findley. He was conscious of a strange feeling of companionship. He noted, for the first time comprehendingly, how pale the man was, how drawn his mouth, how puckered, as if with intensity of suffering, were his deep-set eyes. Had the tie of jealousy drawn them together, apart from the scoffing, laughing crowd? Dennis, resenting the thought, shrugged his shoulders and turned sharply away.

At dinner he was still gloomy and withdrawn. Barbara in her evening dress, that was almost an Oriental costume, consumed his vision. The sight of her ate into his resistance like acid. He determined that, come what might, he must see her alone.

The girl was perfectly aware of the extent of her conquest. The expression upon her hostess' face and the edge on her voice did not go unnoticed in her case. It was perfume to the nostrils of her vanity, but dangerous perfume that might easily overcome and destroy. She realized that. Therefore, Barbara encouraged Priestly's gallantries, in the face of the dumb fury of Deliah Findley.

They rose from the table. A bridge game was suggested, and voted down in favor of the beauty of the languid summer night. The after deck, now softly lit by electric bulbs in wrought-brass lanterns from Constantinople, was peopled with groups of two and three, sipping coffee and dawdling over liqueurs. The young moon was low, and sea and sky were as a velvet case for its precious setting. Even the voices of

the careless guests were hushed. And now the cunning, that was so much a part of Barbara's make-up, found the time ripe.

Not for nothing had she denied herself the pleasure of Dennis' presence all the day long. Now at last it would be safe to take what she wanted: the thrill of his surrender, the blazing consciousness of her own power.

Tremayne found himself alone with her at last. He congratulated himself on the skillfulness of his maneuvering, never for a moment guessing that it was the girl herself who had managed the evasion. They escaped to the shadows forward, where it seemed in the overpowering ecstasy of their first kiss, as if the onward-rushing ship bore them alone to enchanting isles.

They neither saw nor heard a woman approach stealthily, stand a frozen moment watching them, and as stealthily turn away. The cold fury that fell upon Hermione was characteristic. So was the bitter, clairvoyant calm that followed. Alone in the magnificent simplicity of her cabin, she took herself in hand. She examined the situation and dissected the two young people with the scalpel of her hard, clear judgment.

So Dennis was in love, taken in completely by that sunny-haired little vampire. Well, that was easy. A little disenchantment would do the business and send him back, disillusioned and penitently grateful, where he belonged. Of course, she acknowledged to herself with her customary honesty, she was a fool of an old woman. But she was hurt badly. Somehow her sense of ownership in her secretary had taken on a color of permanency after three years. Having carefully planned her trap, she took a double sedative powder, and thus, conserving energy, she went quickly to sleep.

Dennis Tremayne went to his bunk that night in a daze of happiness. He did not close his eyes; he did not want

to; to lie and remember was Heaven's shadow.

As she brushed her shiny hair Barbara smiled at her flushed reflection in the mirror with a divided heart and mind. She had the gorgeous Dennis firmly in hand, and he was a wonderful lover. She almost wished—but— Oh, it wouldn't do; she couldn't afford him. That took millions, like the mustard-colored Hermione's. There was a disagreeable interview ahead somewhere, but it could be pushed off for a time. She yawned as prettily as a kitten and tumbled into bed.

Unaccountably, to one not aware of the situation, Mrs. Philmore became suddenly delighted with her week-end party. She would not have it broken up. Like the autocrat she was, she demanded that all engagements be broken and the yacht continue to carry them on a round of visits up and down the coast for at least a week or ten days. They would use the wireless to convey the information to other expectant hosts and hostesses that Mrs. Y. Lyon Philmore had decided to prolong her cruise. This news, imparted next morning to her guests, was received with varied emotions. Dennis beamed; so did Priestly. Deliah raged inwardly, but, as she knew only too well, Mrs. Philmore's account with her husband's brokerage firm was an item not to be argued with. Susan Collingwood was delighted. She did not get the answer to the riddle of the royal command, and was intrigued. The attentions of the famous secretary had not gone unobserved, and Hermione was taking it well. One wondered.

The hub upon which this wheel of chance and fate revolved was a little frightened. Barbara had counted on a quick exit from the immediate tangle. She was disconcerted. On the other hand, Mrs. Philmore shone; she was brilliant, caustic, amusing. She exhaled charm, that power that has nothing

to do with age, color, or previous conditions of servitude; for criticize her as one might, and many did, Hermione was a personage, dynamic, energizing. After the lightning of her speech the very air had the tang of ozone.

Barbara was puzzled, but was enlightened when on the second day out she was commanded to the privacy of the royal suite.

"You're a girl after my own heart," said Mrs. Philmore without preamble. "You will go far." Barbara looked a question and received a like answer. In the secrecy and understanding of their two predatory natures they contrived a wordless bargain. "I'll tell you something, my child," Hermione said, and exhaled a motherliness that in no way deceived her listener; "the greatest joke. I found it out nearly a month ago. Priestly's wife has been dead a year; died in the asylum—amusing, isn't it? Deliah doesn't know it; he's seen to that. Here he is, perfectly marriageable, and still trading on the 'can't get his freedom' thing—old fox. However, he needs to watch out. He's got more millions than are good for him. Some girl will land him—the first one who knows enough to make a row, my dear. I've been chuckling ever since I got the news."

And Barbara, looking like a seraph in blue linen, took the hint.

It was to be a trade. The opportunity to land Priestly—hands off Dennis.

"Really?" Her innocent eyes widened under the older woman's cynical gaze. "I'm so glad, really. I—I'll tell you honestly, I'm awfully— Oh, well, he is charming, isn't he? Don't you think so?"

"My dear," said Hermione, rising and patting the girl on the shoulder, "I thought I saw as much. You mustn't be offended, but I felt I ought to tell you. And he likes you, too, but not better than he likes his freedom—not yet."

They kissed each other, and in so doing, sealed and signed a bill of sale and exchange.

The days that followed were a torture to Dennis Tremayne. He was bewildered. Barbara's treatment of him he could not understand after that night of splendor, that golden surrender. She avoided him, made it impossible for him to contrive a moment alone and demand an explanation. He raged; he moped; in a day his face grew haggard and his eyes sick. Hermione watched him, watched the girl, Priestly, Deliah. She probed the sick eyes of Findley with her lancet glance. The game was being played out according to her rules. She was still the power, the controlling influence, the mind behind the game, and though her heart ached, she was content.

One day, two, three—the hours seemed endless to Dennis. In vain he sought to bend Hermione's will. Usually she deferred quickly and amiably to any suggestion of his, as to a spoiled child. Now she laughed at his expressed desire to land and break up the party, declaring that his ill-assorted menagerie was quite the funniest thing she had ever seen. Then Hermione exploded her well-laid mine. The moment of revelation and disillusionment for Dennis, she decided, had come.

"I'm giving the little Hartridge girl her chance," she told Dennis. "A bright child, that. She'll land Priestly all right, see if she doesn't."

They were sitting in her private boudoir while she absently played Canfield on the stationary table. She did not look up, but she could feel the impact of her words on his naked heart.

He did not answer for a moment. When he did his voice was brittle.

"Land him?" Indignation suddenly broke the ice of his manner, and he flamed. "Are you daring to let that good-for-nothing rounder compromise that girl? What do you mean by this?

Doesn't she know he's married to a lunatic, and can't get a divorce? It's abominable!"

The wise old eyes glanced at him quietly.

"She knows more than you do," she snapped. "She knows that his wife is dead. I told her."

Mercifully she devoted her attention to the cards. With an instinct of flight he rose.

"Sit down," she ordered, but her voice was soft. His knees gave under him, and he sank down. "I haven't seen you, really, for days. Where have you been keeping yourself?" she said kindly. "By the way, I think I'll build a polo field and a golf course on the Cannon property. It's in the market, I hear. When we get back I'll want you to go into the matter, and"—she reached for an embroidered bag behind her on the chair—"it's the anniversary of your coming to me. Here's a little something by way of recognition. You're a nice boy, Dinny lad, and a first-class secretary." She thrust a gold cigarette case across the table to him.

Tears came into his eyes. Kindness at this moment of despair gave him a throb of gratitude.

"Thank you, Hermione," he gulped. Absently he pressed the sapphire button of the catch. The case opened, revealing a thousand-dollar bill folded under the cigarette clip.

"You've earned it," she said quickly. "Now run along; and you may tell Captain Manning that we'll head back for home, will you?"

He fumbled for the doorknob and stumbled out into the main saloon. He pulled himself together at sight of a steward moving toward the companion-way with a folding card table.

"Bridge," he thought; "they'll be at it again." Barbara didn't play. Perhaps he might find her alone. Anger flooded his soul; jealousy, hurt pride, thwarted love, all contributed to its fury.

Almost unconscious of what he did, he bounced up the companionway and reached the deck. His hot glance swept the group under the after awning. She was not there. He turned on his heel and strode forward. There, leaning against the chart house, he saw her, her golden head resting against the mahogany, her skin against the dark wood, looking more than ever flowerlike. Bending over her, his hand on her shoulder, talking close, stood the man he hated. Priestly drew away and turned sharply as he saw his companion's eyes widen in fright.

Dennis surged down upon them.

"You'll excuse me," he said abruptly. "Miss Hartridge, may I have a word with you?" She looked up helplessly, and Priestly stiffened.

"See here," he began belligerently, "don't adopt that tone to this lady."

Dennis stared at him.

"I hear you are free, a widower at last. I congratulate you."

Priestly gasped; slowly he paled; in spite of himself he sent an anxious glance in the girl's direction. He had thought the secret of his release well hidden. He was astounded.

"I don't know what business it is of yours," he said curtly.

"It isn't," said Dennis dangerously; "but I don't care for a man who makes capital out of his position and hides the fact when his situation changes. However, I will leave it to Miss Hartridge. Will she speak to me a moment in private, or does she prefer to take you into our confidence?"

Barbara's face had gone white; her blue eyes, even, seemed to have lost their color. Instinctively she tried to summon tears to her rescue, but she was too frightened. She looked imploringly at the older man and made a gesture of consent to Dennis. Black browsed, Priestly stepped aside and moved out of hearing, but not out of sight.

The boy's fury broke in piteous plead-

ing, and with his first words her confidence returned, and her anger, too.

"Barbara," he begged, "tell me it isn't true. You did mean it when you let me love you? You aren't throwing me down? I meant to ask you to marry me. I ask you now——"

"Go away! I hate you!" she grieved between set teeth. Her words were like so many blows.

He leaned toward her.

"I love you; I love you. I don't believe that you're deliberately selling yourself to that old libertine. You won't; you can't. You to be owned body and soul by a thing like that!"

"Let me go this instant, or I shall call for help," she snarled. "You're a nice one to talk to me. How about you? An old woman's lap dog, that's what you are, living on a woman's vanity pay roll. If you're living high, you're paying high for it." In her ungovernable rage the yellow streak of her breeding showed clear.

Dennis stepped back three slow steps. She sprang from him and darted down the deck. She still had presence of mind enough to throw herself into Priestly's arms, and use her now-ready tears. Dennis, his face set, his eyes burning, jerked open the chart-house door. He did not even see the man who stepped aside quickly to let him pass. He stormed out on the opposite side onto the windward deck and hurried, panting like a wounded animal, to the sanctuary of his cabin. But the man behind the chart-room door opened it silently and came out where but a few moments before such momentous words had been spoken.

Barbara, in Priestly's arms, was sobbing while he patted her and held her to him. The newcomer was beside them now, a lean, stern-faced man, with eyes that glittered and worn lines about his sensitive mouth.

"If what I have overheard is true," he said with bitter calmness, "and you

are a free man, Priestly, you are going to marry my wife. I couldn't throw her out to the sort of thing your position made possible—couldn't, that's all. But now! Sorry, Miss Hartridge, to interfere with your plans." He turned again to the man. "And don't think you can get out of it, either, Priestly. You understand me clearly." He looked into his enemy's contorted face with the level look of one who had gone beyond suffering, turned on his heel, and walked away.

On the whole, Mrs. Y. Lyons Philmore was well pleased by the way things were going. Of course, Dennis would be hard hit and sulk, that was to be expected, but that he had been shocked out of his infatuation there could be no doubt, and otherwise it was a lovely mess and worth watching. She regretted that Dennis was in no mood to share that amusement with her, but that would come later. He'd adjust as soon as Barbara was out of sight, and be her gay, devoted servitor once more. She had read Barbara's venal nature like a book. And even Susan Collingwood had never sized up Jimmy Findley right, so his sudden upsetting of the Hart-ridge apple cart had been a genuine surprise all around.

Well, they could all take their little problems home and tinker with them to suit themselves. Hers was solved. Dennis was back in the fold; that was the important thing. So it was with calm, amiable content that she saw him enter the library after the guests had dispersed. She was prepared for his confidences, prepared to mold his will and feelings. Flare-ups would happen. She grinned at him happily.

"Well, Dinny lad, a pretty party, n'est-ce pas? Well, it's over, thank Heaven, and we can have a little peace and quiet. I've been thinking—London for a month. You need some new clothes. What say?"

But he did not sit down, as was his custom, and joke with her and tease her. He was pale; he looked different, older; his voice was lower, with an odd note of thoughtfulness.

"I came to tell you, I'm going—leaving."

She shot to her feet with the suddenness of a spring released, one hand thrust out toward him.

He put the gold cigarette case on the table.

"I can't take that; really, Hermione, I can't. I've been your lap dog; I've been a—never mind, I can't. I've just found myself out. It's no go. I'm going out on my own. I know what you're going to say. I'm about as fitted to make my own way as a baby; but, if I've let myself off learning how to stand alone till now, well, it's time I learned."

"Dinny!" she whispered. "Dinny lad."

"Don't think I'm not grateful. I am. You've been as good"—he nerved himself—"as a mother could be." He saw her wince and went on: "You thought I'd come home and curl up in the blue satin basket—" He was sorry for his words. "Beg pardon. It's just this, Hermy: I'm what she told me. Oh, I know she isn't any better than I am, really, I suppose. But it can't go on. I can't. I'm going; my trunks are packed. I want to thank you—"

"But, boy," she interrupted, "you can't. I won't have it." She looked in his eyes, and suddenly realized that against what she saw there she was powerless. She had nothing to offer. Respect, admiration—she had never dreamed that he could command either of these emotions from her. Slowly her thick-fingered, strong-palmed hand turned to his with a new meaning. "Good-by, boy," she said.

He was gone. In her heart a door closed with the shutting of the one out of which Dennis Tremayne passed. But she was Hermione Philmore, not to be

discounted by any one. A moment later she had her brokers on the phone.

"Yes, I know Mr. Findley isn't in yet, but is McIntyre there? This is Mrs. Philmore—yes. . . . That you, Barry? . . . All right, listen to me. My secretary is leaving me. . . . Yes, your Dennis Tremayne wants to make his own way—right, too. Now, see that one of the big firms gets him—not you; no.

I don't want him to guess I've had a hand in it. If that gets out, I change my account, understand?"

She hung up, her bulldog nose wrinkling with amusement at herself. But she was still the power directing his life. She was still at the helm. She wasn't a helpless old woman. She was Hermione Philmore, and, thus thinking, the ache at her heart was a little comforted.

JULES VERNE'S heroes did not undertake a more romantic and daring adventure than that of salvaging thirty-five million dollars in gold and silver from the *Laurentic's* hold at the bottom of the ocean. The divers who succeeded in accomplishing this task certainly do not believe that adventure is dead.

FOREIGN femininity now purses its lips to apply lipstick flavored with fruit essences such as strawberry, peach and orange, and then opens them to insert cigarettes banded and crested in colors to match the gown of the moment.

INSTEAD of the gay-colored patchwork quilts of our grandmothers' time or the sheer, snow-white linen of our own day, the smart set of ancient Athens used as coverlets dressed peacock skins with the feathers on.

DOES the shortage of small coins, which has caused the Philadelphia mint to work overtime to supply pennies, nickels, and quarters, mean that we are a nation of small spenders? Hardly.

FACES are to be worn pale this winter, the beauty specialists tell us. A little rouge may adorn the chin and the lobes of the ears, but the cheeks—no; madame will be pale faced.

GRAY hair is not a sign of age but of beauty, according to Parisians. Far from disguising the silver strands, French women encourage their growth to increase their charm.

The Prince of Wales receives more than seven hundred letters every day. Frequently his mail bag contains as many as fifteen hundred letters.

The women who select taxis to match their gowns can hardly be accused of being in a hurry.

FOOTSTEPS

By Frances O. J. Gaither

Author of "The Bird Cage,"

"Cousin of the Moon," etc.



SILENCE and hearing fantastic footsteps, hearing the approach of that which three believed the cruelest thing—they were wrong, you know, about what is the cruelest thing; but they weren't mistaken in this: while they stared at each other dumbly what they dreaded did surely creep nearer and nearer with every heartbeat, every breath. That is why silence was so intolerable.

Such a little thing had begun the painful hiatus of speech, such an idle, trivial expression. "What a heavenly day for a walk"—that was the expression. Only the circumstance of their common dread made of the simple speech a solecism, set all three of them looking at each other, groping for words, any words.

Spring afternoon lapped the room in fold upon fold of loveliness. Light came green through branches just misted over with down of foliage. The breeze came warm through open windows, puffing the curtains and smelling of new-turned soil and nameless bloom. Echoes of children's voices rose to an incredible, rhapsodical pitch.

"What are they doing?"

"Who? Oh—the children. I'll see."

Corra went to the south window. Her step was swift, elastic in soft elk skin, rubber-heeled shoes, outdoor shoes that went almost winged. Corra poised at the window against the cloudy curtain and a segment of the afternoon sky. The breeze bolded her silk, plaited skirt and

her soft green sweater against her curves.

"Wait, Corra; don't move. Stand just like that. Look, George. What does she look like?"

"I don't know," said George. But he didn't look at Corra. He went on looking at Ethel with his unhappy eyes.

"Why, that loveliest Victory," Ethel said, "the Samothrace one."

"Ethel!" protested Corra.

Another solecism! Another phantom of glorious motion called up to remind them all that two sheets imprisoned Ethel. Again silence. Their dumbness was the more marked because the windows stood open to let in such rustlings and stirrings and warm breathings. Through that silence so delicately fashioned of warmth and spring and new leaves and earth and nameless bloom, came nearer the shadowy footfalls of that which all three dreaded. Don't listen. Don't listen. Say something. Talk. Drown out the fancied sounds, soft as sighs, nearer with every heartbeat.

Outside flared children's ecstasies.

"Oh, it's kites," cried Corra, suddenly bending to let her gaze soar, "or a kite. I fancy young George made it; it was a bit wobbly and slow on the start. But it's quite lovely; all purple-and-gold tissue paper. And now they've got it up. It's topping the clump of sweet olive and climbing like anything. My, I didn't know Rosemary could run like that!"

George took his folded arms from the

foot of his wife's bed and went to look out, too.

"Oh, yes," he said, swelling with pride. "Rosemary runs. She's a regular——"

"Deer?" offered Ethel, to tease his fondness.

"A rabbit," he retorted, to maintain his stolid self-respect. But he grinned, nevertheless; and the glance he sent back to Ethel across his shoulder was a shade less unhappy.

Ethel lay back smiling as one who would say: "Now we're off; here's the breeze for our sails; we shan't lie becalmed in dread now we've Rosemary to blow us along."

True. The talk sprang briskly. It sped from Rosemary's fleetness to young George's beloved stodginess; from the uncouth shape of the brilliant kite to an argument as to the proper placing of any kite's tail. Ethel from her bed asked how faulty the aeronautics were. Corra said not so dreadful, but it was a pity young George had made his kite so squarish and lopsided. George said, if the position of the tail were altered, the kite was as good as any kite.

"To revert," Ethel said, "please go outdoors. It really is a heavenly afternoon for a walk, as Corra said just now. And it's simply silly for you to spend it indoors because I have to. Go; fix the children's kite for them, and then strike out."

"Yes, do, George," Corra added. "I'll stay with——"

"Nobody's to stay with Ethel—nobody, that is, but three servants and a trained nurse and two children in easy hailing distance if I get lonesome. So much 'staying with' makes me feel as if I were really ill, as if you were afraid I——"

At that, George, having crossed the room, stopped short. Becalmed again! Corra stood at the window and plaited the ruffle of the curtain. George twisted the door knob. Ethel, palms spread per-

suasively, lay stricken dumb on another solecism. This time they were blown out of the dead stillness by the ineffectual door knob's becoming effectual.

That the door opened under his hand seemed a little to surprise George. He rather stumbled and looked around in a wide-eyed way to say:

"Well, if you won't, Corra, I'm off."

His feet plodded off down the hall.

"George isn't exactly a Mark Tapley."

"Mark Tapley? He sounds like some one I ought to know about. Ought I?" asked Corra coming to sit in a low chair close to Ethel.

Ethel laughed. Her pink negligee gave her face an illusory bloom. She was as flawless as a Tanagra figurine.

"Of course you ought. Didn't you have respectable Victorian parents? Didn't your mother read Dickens as he was published? Didn't she compare everybody she mentioned to Mr. Pecksniff or Samuel Weller or——"

"Of course. But I don't seem to place Mark Whoever-it-was that George isn't. Why isn't George?"

"The Tapley person cheered up, the more hopeless things got. As you do, for instance, Corra. But George——"

"I think George is rather a brick," Corra interrupted. "He's frightfully bored, you know, with me at the table instead of you all these months. I think he's rather wonderful not to yawn at me."

The two women laughed together softly. No silences gaped open to dread when they were alone together. Back and forth they tossed the bright ball of talk, back and forth——

George's voice came in through the window.

"Now she'll fly. Get set, Rosemary."

Corra hurried to look out again.

"Well, it does fly better," she told Ethel.

She made her vision a periscope to draw near two children running on a greensward and a kite colored like a

tropic bird winging blue heavens over them.

"You're wonderful, Corra."

"Not at all. What's a friend for?"

Ethel referred apologetically to a typewriter, the loom on which Corra had formerly woven some beauty and a little fame, shrouded, now, and masked under the dust of six months.

"Wouldn't you—for me?" interrupted Corra, somehow shaken by the picture of her own sacrifice.

"Why, Corra! What's the matter with everybody to-day? Is there such a thing as spring nerves?" Ethel sat bolt upright. "See here, I'm not going to have this. You're pining for the outdoors. You're tired of the house. Of course you're tired. How else could you have quavers in your voice? Get outside—this minute. It's sheer sentimentality—not doing it. Hurry. Catch up with George. He needs cheering up. You know he does. Hurry. If you stop to argue, I'll think you think I'm too sick to be left."

George, when Corra overtook him at the bottom of the lane where the hedge stops, started and cried out. Corra had seen him look white-lipped like that before: once when she had been bending over the dinner table rearranging some clumsiness of the maid's, and he had come suddenly upon her.

It was easy to understand how it startled and pained him to see suddenly another woman busying herself about Ethel's accustomed concerns. Still, it hurt whenever, as now, she who wanted to comfort called pain into George's face. She wished her buoyancy, her vigor, needn't affront his sensibilities, needn't remind him and open his ears to creeping footfalls.

"She's weaker, isn't she?" George said.

"Oh, I hope not. She seems much the same to me."

She swung into step beside him.

"I was thinking how she loved this

lane, loved walking. Your footsteps startled me."

"Rubber soles make one a bit of a sneak," Corra apologized.

"And you came so quickly. How could you? I mean how could you not be here and then be here just at my elbow like that?"

"I ran. She made me come, after all. And I thought she'd be disappointed if I didn't catch up with you. So I ran."

"Oh, you ran."

Verily, he wasn't a Mark What's-his-name. Corra tried again.

"It's a wonderful day, isn't it?"

"Wonderful." But he wasn't enthusiastic.

"Dogwood's opening."

"Is it?" Still he was absent. "I suppose it really doesn't matter if we leave her, Corra?"

"No. It doesn't matter." The shadowy footsteps come with every heart-beat, whether we go or stay.

Corra tried the brightest of all topics. She said that Rosemary, following young George's lead, had struck the flag of her resentment at Corra's doing for her the things Ethel had always done.

"She quite clung to me last night when I tucked her up," Corra declared.

The path dipped on a sharp slope. It lay red beneath their feet, red sand netted with russet pine needles. Their figures cleaving vertical walls of pine shadows and thin slices of sunlight flashed deceptive angularities like camouflaged hulls of ships. Corra's eyes found this out at once. After the serene half light in Ethel's room this winking sun and shadow was so dazzling as to be painful.

Corra looked down at her swift-rippling silk skirt and her soft green sweater, saw them now not as the wind-curved draperies of winged beauty, but barred and broken by knife-edged light and shade like some mad cubist dream.

George was square and plodding. His

lips and his brows slowly relaxed while he talked about the children. The slices of dark and light cut his stocky, tweed-clad figure up into a puzzle—he was a puzzle really, Ethel's inarticulate husband. But he tried to smile.

"I'm not good at expressing things," George stammered, "but I—well, the way you dropped your work and came the very minute you knew what Ethel was in for——"

"Don't," begged Corra.

"And now it's run into months I'm always feeling as if we oughtn't to let you stay on and on."

"Please," said Corra. "It's what I came for; to stay till——"

In the green hollow to which they were come a Cherokee rose wreathed a live oak. It was amazingly beautiful to see the new life in the old tree. Gray of trunk, gray of mossy garments, somber of foliage, the tree was looped and festooned with ropes of shining, new rose leaves, and blossoms, saucer wide, white as milk.

"It's all so uncertain," George said; "how long, I mean. It may be months; it may end—I mean it must end. That's all we are certain of."

They stared at each other in a green-lit vale below a hoary hag of a tree crowned by importunate spring like any virgin May queen. Here in the open, one had to strain to hear the haunting footsteps. They seemed incredible, fantastic, because *things* sounded so. Twigs crackled; branches rubbed; leaves stirred; a bird called. A thousand outdoor noises drowned out dread.

Corra heard her voice begin "cheering George up." Her voice went steadily as if it were wound and set going at Ethel's wish. It would go and go and go. She was talking about the children again when they passed on through the hollow where the rose-wreathed live oak was. She was still talking about the children when her feet drummed with George's on the bridge.

Corra and George stopped and leaned on the rail. They stood in full sunlight, though shade bent over in front of them from both sides. The branches of a hundred delicious growing things along the banks of the stream nearly met above it. A cardinal cut through the breathing leaves. The cardinal flashed the red of pigment in shadow and the red of flame in the sun. Ripples in the surface of the stream, gold-edged, set an image on the sandy bottom, far, far below, a quivering, gold-threaded net on the sand. That was out in midstream. Near the banks it was the hundred green things which stamped their image deep, made the stream run black in shadow. Ti-ti, whitening like early stars, shone a milky way of luminous bloom in two bands of shade dark as night.

The stream made a flickering, licking sound, and puffs of breeze twitched the broken arch of branches so that they flickered audibly, too, like the whisper of flame. Corra's voice went on and on. Set going by Ethel's wish, it flowed untiring. It was wistful; it persuaded as it sounded words—some words; she never could remember just what it was she said. But whatever it was, she said it smiling up into his face with Ethel's own wish to see the unhappy shadows fade a little from his eyes, said it with Ethel's determination to speak whatever would drown the phantom sound she knew he lived in dread of.

Corra's elbows rested on the rail before her. Her hands, twirling a twig she had broken, hung loosely. Having finished saying whatever it was, she stopped and listened for the laugh that ought to have come, because, whatever it was, it was something funny. He didn't laugh. Instead, his lips twisted as if in pain. Then she spoke to him again, and it happened. It wasn't anything that she had said—she is positive of that. Maybe it was the twig she held in her hands, which was huckleberry with

coral-tipped bells, or star-white ti-ti—something that bloomed. Curiously she seemed unable to drop the twig. Her hands clung to it as if it were somehow important, clung to it all through that incredible moment under a broken arch of shadow in a patch of gold spring light—that moment which, amazingly, seemed right while it lasted.

George's lips came down to hers; and hers, incredibly, clung to his. That's what happened. But the moment can't be told. It would have to be painted in gold of sun and green of new leaf and flush of bloom; or, no, not painted, but played on strings that breathe and quiver. Afterward, after that moment words cannot touch, they stood staring, stood apart in two ragged shadows staring at each other across an empty pool of spring sunlight on a wooden bridge.

They stood in two shadows ripped raggedly apart by sun. Both clutched at shreds of speech to clothe somehow the starkness of fact: This is the end. The end? Ah, we are not children. That was never an end. That was a beginning—of—of—something.

"I'll go away," whispered Corra.

"Go away before—go away now? Leave Ethel?"

"How can I *not* leave her?"

"But how can you?"

They spoke strained, hurrying speeches that availed little to drown the fearful pumping sound of their hearts and all the rushing music of wood and stream that lapped around them like sound of mounting flame.

"If I stay, mightn't she guess?"

"If you went, wouldn't she know?"

Silence, or such of silence as can be in the very heart of whispering, hurrying spring.

"I must go back to her quickly," panted Corra. "She mustn't lie there by herself—thinking. What have I done? She has—such a little while. It must be perfect—the little while. I must hurry. Oh, I oughtn't to have left her."

Running on rubber soles that could not give her feet wings even on paths cushioned with leaves and pine needles, she found the twig in her hand that was huckleberry—ti-ti—something that bloomed. The sight of it frightened her like a guilty stain upon her fingers. She flung it from her.

She gathered dogwood for Ethel.

She gathered it hurrying, impatient that the best branches were high and out of reach; she gathered it sobbing a little, sobbing childishly, because breaking branches of dogwood is hard. A branch she pulled down with a long, forked stick flew out of control, tugged at her sweater, scratched her hands. She got hot and panting gathering the dogwood sprays.

Then, although she had run so at first and had hurried to get the bloom for Ethel, she began now to lag unreasonably. Although she knew Ethel must not be left alone to quiet and whatever haunting thoughts should come tiptoeing, still she let dismay clog her haste. She loitered first in the green hollow where the live oak grew, unseemly garlanded for spring. She didn't own to dismay. She said to herself only that she oughtn't to go hot and panting to Ethel, that the sweet sanctuary of Ethel's serenity must not be disturbed by Corra's flying feet. Corra must not go tempestuously blundering into Ethel's quiet.

She stopped and tried to still her breathing.

"Yet I must hurry; I must not let her lie there thinking."

It was late afternoon when she came up the sand path. Low, red sunlight was cut into thin slices by the straight blades of black shadow, and when at last she turned the corner where the hedge begins a light was already going in Ethel's window. She faltered anew when she saw the house, low and spreading upon the breast of the hill, a lovely, sleeping shadow crouching against the sunset, a tranquil, drowsing shadow ex-

cept for that one light. Dusk, as if an emanation of the breathing earth, veiled the lawn.

So was she still divided between hesitation and urgency that she left off running when she heard the children's voices, drew up short, hands against her laboring breast. But when the children found her standing by the sweet olive clump, and shouted that she was come in time to see them fly their kite once more, she said no, no, she'd been gone so long she ought to hurry on upstairs now. She said it with her eyes wide on the gently pulsing, light-flushed curtains in Ethel's windows over their heads. Then after all the faint strength of her resolution swooned under the ardor of their concerted embrace.

Corra stood on the darkening lawn and watched two children launch a kite. She watched two children, vague in the stratum of dusk that lay along the sod, send up on invisible string a bit of paper that aspired to heaven. One of the children was a faunlike girl who ran with peculiar lightness and grace, like some beloved Tanagra figurine miraculously animate; the other was the small stumbling, copy of a stocky man, even to the plain unloveliness of his name.

Corra's body still quivered from their childish warmth like strings that a bow has stroked. The sky was flushing and the earth just purpling. Nameless bloom breathed perfume. Branches whispered with new, downy plumage. It was almost the close of an afternoon in spring.

Ethel's nurse, dim as a phantom, held the curtains apart and leaned out of the window. Something mysterious about her dusk-shadowed face or else about the white dress of her calling smote Corra afresh. Certainly never before had she heard so terrifyingly distinct the hurrying, hurrying phantom feet. They made her pulse pound, made her very eardrums thud, thud, thud. The pounding, real or fancied, so deaf-

ened her that she scarcely hoped to hear any answer at all to her swift:

"How is she?"

But she heard: Ethel was no worse.

"Tell her I'm coming up," said Corra.

And she went up. Of course she went up to Ethel's room. What else was there to do?

Ethel, in the roseate glow of a small, silk-bonneted bedside lamp, greeted her with a quizzical smile. It was a playful, affectionate smile, a smile delicately challenging. It made of Corra's coming in alone a joke for two who loved each other to laugh at.

"Couldn't George's gallantry quite stand the test of bringing you home? Or didn't you overtake him?"

"I overtook him. Yes. I overtook him. But I stopped. I——"

"Yes?"

"I stopped to—gather dogwood for you."

Stupid speech, followed by dumbness. Silence when Ethel and Corra were alone was unprecedented. Stupid of Corra to let silence come for any haunting sound to enter a-tiptoe.

"Aren't you going to give it to me?"

"Give it to you?"

"My dogwood!"

Ethel's laugh broke like a bubble.

She received the branches of bloom in very white hands. Her hands made the blossoms Corra had brought her show green, immature, harsh. Ethel said she wondered if the bloom could go on and whiten in water. They'd really been pulled a mite too soon. She asked the nurse for a vase; or, no, not a vase, a bowl, that wide, green pottery thing that some one had sent tulips in ever so long ago.

Propped up, her bowl on the table beside her, her sprays of dogwood spread on the counterpane, Ethel sent the nurse away and talked to Corra. Ethel and Corra were alone when the nurse went out.

Ethel's voice was frail, ephemeral, but

very bright, too, like a candle flame shielded in careful hands.

"I've been having a beautiful time ever since you left." Ethel tilted her head to test the poise of a spray her fingers caressed. Ethel was exquisite and so beloved, sweet and frail as a candle flame. "I wasn't a bit lonely. It's really lovely lying in bed now I can have the windows open. Outdoors is very mysterious when you only hear it and smell it. I like guessing what's going on. Do you ever think of time as running, Corra?"

Corra, standing still in the middle of the floor, stared at the dogwood while Ethel talked. The dogwood made Corra see water beneath a broken arch of shade, a stream entangled by a mirrored net of its own image, gold-threaded. She heard the wavering, frailly flickering flame of Ethel's voice, one with leaves that ticked and flickered, and starry bloom of ti-ti twinkling light in shadow, one with a bird that darted red-winged from crisp foliage, one with Corra's own voice "cheering George up," a voice that yearned.

Corra saw all of spring in that dogwood untimely gathered. She saw all of sunlight poured upon a wooden bridge, felt George's lips, felt her pulse pounding again till her throat ached. Corra was sorry she had brought the dogwood. It was one with the guilty twig she had flung away. The very crackle of the leaves and the immature petals under Ethel's white hands whispered intolerable things.

"Well, set it up for me, somewhere, dear," said Ethel pushing the bowl away and leaning back against her pillows. "I've no business talking so much. But it is sweet to have you bring in May. Might know you'd think to. Poor old George never would. If he walked through the Garden of Hesperides, he'd come in empty-handed."

In that instant the door opened.

George seemed to stumble when he

came in, seemed to stumble and then stopped dumb and blinking. George looked squarer than ever when, as now, he wore knickerbockers. He was muddy. His shoes and even his heather wool stockings were muddy. Something pink glowed in his two hands, held up awkwardly and yet cherishingly at his breast. He stood blinking at the rose-shaded lamp across the foot of the bed. He stood without speaking, huddling that glow of bloom at his breast.

His dumbness seemed to close in on that room.

Spring dusk drifted through the windows in wave upon wave of languor. It sifted purple shadows in upon the outskirts of rose-tinted light. It puffed the curtains in and out, in and out, made them throb like a pulse. Something thudded in Corra's ears, some real or fancied beat like running feet. There was revelation in those footsteps: the cruelest thing is not—what we all dread. It is that which runs, dances, tugs, breathing bloom, breathing warmth, panting, panting, panting, too impatient to stay for anything. If Ethel now should hear the flying, leaping feet of life, that would be the cruelest thing.

Ethel, on her pillows, couldn't see who had opened the door. Maybe she guessed by the dumbness.

"George?" He answered, and she said: "You let Corra come home alone. Oh, George, how could you?"

Her reproach was delicately pitched, just a tiny joke for three who cared about each other to laugh about. But George took it ponderously. A perspiration stood on his lip. He stammered, looking down at the flowers he had brought. The mass of bloom against his tweeds defined itself to Corra's stare, curling corolla, coral-red stamens—swamp honeysuckle.

He answered Ethel's reproach painstakingly.

"I didn't bring Corra home. No. I went on. I wanted to—gather——"

Corra hardly knew what she did.

She snatched the flowers from George, snatched them before he could bring them one inch nearer Ethel's range of vision, and flung them through the open window.

Outside sounded running feet and then a cry as if the evening, which could pant and run on tiptoe, were vocal, too, a cry almost too sweet to bear.

Corra swung around facing the room, leaned against the window frame, panting, staring at her spread fingers. She held her fingers wide as though the flush of George's flowers had stained them. She could not speak. She could not look up. Reiterant ecstasy flared in the dusk outside.

"Do it again, Corra!"

"What did you do to set my children mad with giggles?"

Ethel couldn't see. Corra must tell her.

"I—only—dropped some flowers."

"They want you to do it again."

Ethel's brightness was as steady as a candle flame shielded by careful hands. It guided Corra. Corra gathered up all the flowers which stood about the room in vases here and there. The stems were wet and scattered drops because Corra dragged at them hastily. Last of all, she tugged unwhitened dogwood from a green pottery bowl.

Ethel said:

"Please tell those infants to come in, Corra. They have run miles this day. I believe I'll hear their feet in my sleep."

Corra went to the window. The perfume of swamp honeysuckle hovered like the trail of a descending rocket. The children's upturned faces were dim targets. She opened her hands and let wet-stemmed flowers fall in the dark. Excited voices called for more and more until there were no more, and then two shadows of delight moved to come in as they were told. They came running. Their little shoes struck a staccato of joy on the bricks of the loggia.



THE SHEPHERDESS OF LOVE

YOU are the shepherdess of love, for you

Take all the little loves of every day

And fold them for eternity away

Where they at nightfall turn with instinct true;

Chords of symphonies; scenes great painters drew;

The theater's pageant; gleam of sunlit bay

Or city building; sky with clouds of gray;

Birds' songs when yet the nesting time is new.

Now you have folded all these lesser loves

Take mine for you, and clasp me to your breast,

Bringing me peace for restless thought that roves

Forever, seeking in uncertain quest,

And lead me, happy, where the whole world moves

To light eternal and eternal rest.

NORREYS JEPHSON O'CONOR.

THE SQUANDERING MISER

AH, you are lavish with the gifts you bring me;
The loveliness of earth you spend at will;
For me you make a harp of the wind at evening;
From crested waves my hands with pearls you fill.

But your miser heart is closed against my hunger.
I know that I shall be, when you have gone,
Like a lone old woman on a fruitless errand,
Who questions always as she stumbles on:

"Yes, I am seeking, always seeking some one;
I wonder if by chance he passed this way?
He tossed me all earth's beauty for a keepsake,
And went off singing on a sunny day."

EDITH I. COOMBS.



HARBOR OF CONDEMNED SHIPS

THESE narrowly turn upon a sluggish tide
A cable's length, who once went proudly down
The fairways of wide ocean; who have tried
All seas and harbors; who have proudly known
Storm, calm, birth, partings, death—now memories,
Fiber of dreams. One ship I pity more:
Unbattered giant; dupe of each breeze that dies
Between the harbor entrance and the shore.

Ah, who shall know the anguish and the strain
Of timbers underneath the fluttering row
Of petticoats hung out to dry, or know
The inarticulate and frustrate pain
Of untried ships that rot contentedly,
Thinking the narrow harbor is the sea?

DOROTHY STOCKBRIDGE.



Freedom to Remember

By Elizabeth Newport Hepburn

Author of
"Pride of Galatea," "Wings of Desire," etc.

EVEN in that noisy office high above the street, with its clatter of machines and its perpetual ringing of telephones and its inner room sacred to ticker tape, there was to-day a hint of the subtle demoralization which comes with the tripping feet and tapping fingers of that huzzy, April.

John Halpin sat at his desk and looked the beau ideal of a successful stockbroker, rather thin, perhaps, but well-groomed, immaculately clad, imperturbable. He was the office partner; Hopper was the man who did the actual trading on the floor of the Exchange. Now it was after four, and Halpin had dictated his correspondence, reached sundry decisions as a result of that day's trading, and made his queer, personal memoranda in his pocket notebook. There was a line about Galveston Electric, a question mark against Colton preferred, and there was a couplet curious to find in the notebook of a busy broker:

A face that you remember when April comes again,
't's sudden look of loneliness, its subtle hint of pain.

He read the lines again, then laughed rather grimly, at himself, shut the book, and sat quite still, remembering. For, despite appearances, he was the remembering kind, that was the weakness and the strength of him. But to-day his inner vision was concerned not with his mother, who had died while he was in France, nor with those dead boys he had known and loved who had been killed in Flanders, but with a woman in New York, a woman neither beautiful nor young nor especially prominent, socially speaking. Her name was Pauline Shelton, and she was a writer of verse which appeared in a good many magazines and interested a good many people.

Of course it was an indefensible proceeding, this mixing sentiment with business. Halpin was sure that other men never did it, his sane, level-headed partner, men he knew, brokers, lawyers, business men! They divided their lives cleanly into two parts: one half meant working hours, the other amusements, social contacts. He alone was guilty of mixing what should always be kept religiously separated! But to-day there

was something the matter with him. A breeze blew in from the bay; from his desk he could see leagues of sky, water so incredibly blue that it looked painted. He told himself that the air was tainted with city soot and gasoline, yet the composite smell that reached his nostrils surely reeked of growing things, of the hundred subtle essences of April.

His stenographer came back, asked him a question. She was slender and young, with that delicate fairness which has not been accented with lip stick, rouge, eyebrow pencil. Halpin knew that she was a lady, as well born as himself, that she came from Kentucky, where her people were distinguished, but poor. And sometimes, in spite of their wholly courteous, but impersonal relation, it had seemed to him that her young eyes were asking questions, the old, unspoken, but inevitable questions of the unattached maiden, however modern, however she may scorn the archaic word. And the questions were: "Are you interested? Do you find me attractive, good to look at?"

To-day she was especially charming. Her gray frock was touched with vivid blue at the belt and collar; it hung loosely from her shoulders, merely suggesting the long lines and slight curves of her figure. Her low suede shoes and silk stockings were gray. The touches of blue brought out her vivid coloring, pale gold and rose; the dull gray accorded with one's notion of what is suitable attire in a business office. She was saying:

"Then that's all, Mr. Halpin? I may go?"

Halpin looked at her again, surprised a flush on her smooth, oval cheeks. He said in a rather thoughtful, yet slightly whimsical voice:

"Not quite all, perhaps."

She waited, the flush deepening. Halpin wondered what he was going to say next, and cordially disapproved of himself. Then:

"Miss Ashley, have you noticed the sort of day it is? I suppose I'm talking about the—weather."

She looked at him; then her white teeth showed. Her smile was delightful.

"Can one help noticing it, even in the busiest office? Why, Mr. Halpin, they are all screaming at us—the sky and the water and the whole smelly, crowded, noisy town—'Spring! Spring! Spring!' All day long I've been hearing it!"

Halpin had brought this outburst upon himself, yet he was obviously astonished. For she had ceased to be his private secretary and become a Person. She was standing with head flung back, eyes on the careening white clouds, racing across the sky like great sailboats. All that air and light and color seemed to invade the office, sweeping away ticker tape and typewriters and investing the place with the golden delirium of the year's youth.

"Where do you live, Miss Ashley?" Halpin demanded sharply. "It's queer that I don't know. In the Village, or 'way uptown?"

Her tilted chin came down. She looked again a possible stenographer, not wholly a dryad.

"I'm one of the dreadful commuters, only I travel by boat, so it's not so bad. I live in a funny, shabby, clean little hotel—on Staten Island."

Halpin nodded. Then, with frank simplicity, he said:

"I might have guessed it. You haven't that exhausted look which comes of subway crowding. But, even so, don't you think you might dine with me? Later on I can take you down to your boat—or home, for that matter."

"Oh, that isn't necessary. After the boat trip there's a car that sets me down three blocks from my own front door. And if I'm late there's a lumbering old cab to take me home. So I'd like to

dine with you very much, if you're sure you want me."

Halpin seemed very sure. And presently he heard a crisp young voice:

"Ready, Mr. Halpin."

Halpin knew a pleasant, un-American hotel, near Washington Square, and it was here that the two had their dinner that spring afternoon. Cherrystone clams, little red radishes and ripe olives, good French bread and unsalted butter, a succulent porterhouse steak, with broiled tomatoes, a salad, a sweet, and coffee—this was their meal, and the girl told Halpin that she had tasted nothing half so good since she had left the Blue Grass.

As the room filled up she watched the newcomers with observant eyes. Her comments amused Halpin.

"Do look at the gay old gentleman with the fancy waistcoat and three chins! And at his little grandson, exactly like him even to the chins. How straight and handsome the mother is! She carries her head like—like a—what do you call it, caryatid?"

"I don't call it," said Halpin. "Like *Sentimental Tommy* there are 'words I have no concern with!' But how do you know the man isn't the child's father?"

"Oh, no!" said Virginia Ashley. "That woman wouldn't have——"

"Oh, youth, youth!" Halpin sighed.

She tilted her chin at him.

"You aren't old and I'm not so frightfully young, either! But look at the dark-eyed woman with the violets. She is so alive that I feel as if the flowers she wears must live a long time. You know what I mean. She writes or acts or sings—something! And the younger man with her probably works with her; he's an actor or an artist, I don't know which."

Halpin was conscious of flushing hotly, like some callow youth.

"You're rather good at guessing, Miss Ashley. The lady with the violets

is a friend of mine, Mrs. Shelton, and she does write! The man with her is a musician, Nicholas Marne. She is writing the songs for his new opera."

As he spoke, in too low a tone to be heard even at the next table, the woman with the violets glanced in their direction, then nodded to Halpin with a smile. Virginia Ashley was pink and eager.

"Pauline Shelton, is it? I know her verse. Oh, Mr. Halpin, I would so love to meet her, if I were just important enough!"

Halpin smiled.

"I don't believe Pauline cares particularly for important people. Finish your dinner and we'll stop at their table as we go out."

Which they did, and Mrs. Shelton greeted the younger woman with the direct look and whimsical half smile reserved for people she liked.

"It's wonderful to meet you, Mrs. Shelton!" Virginia cried, her shyness forgotten. "I've read so much of your poetry. And when Mr. Halpin told me who you were I was thrilled to my toes!"

Pauline laid her hand over the girl's for an instant, laughing softly.

"Isn't it wiser not to meet the people we've heard about? After the performance *Juliet* turns out to be a matron of fifty in a blond wig, while the star in a modern play—all satire and cynicism—is usually a bromide who chews gum! And poets are the worst of all! I heard one read her masterpieces the other night. She had a double chin and piano legs. The only way I could bear it was to shut my eyes and pretend she wasn't there—that the masterpieces were reading themselves!"

Virginia laughed, secretly conscious of relief that the chin and ankles of this particular poet were still impeccable.

The two men joined in the conversation, and Virginia found herself shyly watching the composer. She had sup-

posed that all musicians possessed rather long, upstanding hair, generally dark and wiry, that they wore turn-down collars and slightly baggy trousers, and looked at you absently with large, dark, soulful eyes. But this young man—and he was surprisingly young to be even a moderately successful composer—was an extraordinary contrast to her preconceived idea of musical genius. For his clothes were conventional in cut, they fitted him beautifully, his collar was upstanding and his hair close clipped, and, moreover, it was a warm auburn; his school-mates must have called him "Redhead" and "Carrots."

When Virginia met his eyes she found that they were not blue, but a warm yellowish brown. He was tall, with fair, freckled skin, irregular features, big nose, generous mouth, ears slightly prominent—surely about him was not a single mark of "temperament," rather an effect of pleasant boyishness. And then she saw his hands, long-fingered, supple, strong. The skin on them was fine-grained; they possessed character, personality. He looked the part, after all. Any mortal creature with such hands must have some exceptional gift, some touch of distinction, some secret power of creating, imagining!

Then he was saying:

"I thought I knew all of Halpin's friends, Miss Ashley. So this is a surprise, an awfully pleasant one, I'll say!"

Virginia's oval face grew pink and her eyes shone.

"Oh, I'm quite new, and dreadfully unimportant, compared with people who do things."

The young man chuckled.

"Usually they're deadly, as Mrs. Shelton says. *Being* has it over *doing* every time." His eyes added what he did not say in words: that this friend of John Halpin was an altogether satisfactory addition to one's acquaintance.

Then the girl heard Mrs. Shelton say to Halpin:

"You must bring Miss Ashley to see me, Johnny. Soon."

As Virginia and Halpin left the restaurant the girl said:

"Mrs. Shelton is wonderful, like the things she writes, queer, stimulating, and—what's the word?—elusive."

Halpin held open the door for her, smiling rather ruefully, yet with little glints of pleasure in his eyes.

"Yes, Pauline is 'stimulating,' likewise 'elusive.' And I'm very glad you appreciate her. But then I knew you would."

"Who wouldn't?" said the girl quickly. "Just in that little while I knew that there could be nobody like her in the world!"

Halpin was silent, and they walked through Washington Square with the spring wind blowing Virginia's hair and frock, bringing a tinge of color to Halpin's brown pallor.

"How did you like Nicholas Marne?" he asked presently.

"Oh, very much. But he seems awfully young. I mean to be writing operas."

"But this is a young man's world, Miss Virginia," Halpin said rather sadly. "Ever since the beginning of the war youth has been at a premium. I got in—a sort of lucky accident, since I was over age. But there are times since the armistice when I've felt ninety instead of forty-odd."

Virginia's shrug gave him a queer sense of reassurance.

"Of course you know that's nonsense, Mr. Halpin. Being forty means being right in the middle of things, only past the crudeness and conceit of younger men. They're often irritating, talking perpetually about themselves, knowing so much!"

Halpin laughed at her tone, and felt suddenly that, after all, life was full of possibilities, even if Pauline still seemed

unable to forget that old feeling of hers for Randal Kemp. And how pretty this girl looked in the spring twilight, with her grave, sweet eyes and the bright hair that glinted like warm sunlight under the new hat!

Then they discussed theaters, and eventually lost themselves in a pleasant, dimly lighted house, where a strange, tragic play by a young Irishman was drawing crowds night after night. To Halpin the drama seemed unnecessarily lugubrious, but his companion's flushed cheeks and eager eyes repaid him for his pains. And he told himself that youth alone can afford to give itself to contemplating unbroken tragedy! Then the art of playwright and actors caught him out of himself; he forgot to be sententious, was conscious only of the swift rush of the drama.

After that first exciting plunge into the whirlpool New York became a great adventure to Virginia Ashley. At the office the relation between her and Halpin seemed to others sufficiently prosaic and impersonal. But after working hours they were often together. The girl was practically alone in the city, as her mother, of whom she sometimes talked to Halpin, was keeping house in Louisville for a bachelor brother, Virginia's father having died some years earlier. This uncle was a chemist, kindly, erratic, given to forgetting his meals and giving away all his clothes, unless safeguarded by some responsible female.

"He's with a big manufacturing firm where he works ten or twelve hours a day for the lowest possible salary. But he's a kind of a genius. He makes discoveries and invents things that save the company thousands of dollars. They give him a workshop to himself, a funny little building on the grounds, where for hours at a time nobody disturbs him. And he says this privacy and quiet are worth more to him than a big salary or

patents taken out in his own name, that in time he'll put over something really worth while. And I believe he will; he's clever, Uncle Jerry. And terribly sweet to mother and me."

"Uncle Jerry" piques my curiosity," said Halpin. "But I should think having you so far away might be hard on your mother."

Virginia nodded soberly.

"On me, too. I've been frightfully lonesome after office hours. But you see, Mr. Halpin, I've been spoiled. When father was living we were very well off. He was a lawyer, practicing in Lexington, and I went to expensive schools and had a little car of my own. But he went on the note of a cousin of his, and the cousin failed, and then father had to sell our place and begin over again. Seeing us give up things hurt him horribly—and then came that first epidemic of 'flu,' and he died." She paused for an instant, then added sturdily: "I've been trying ever since to stop being a clinging vine and grow into a real oak—little, but 'sturdy.' That's why I answered Mr. Hill's advertisement and came East."

Halpin felt a warm little glow of admiration for the girl. She looked so young, so flowerlike, so utterly unlike his notion of the modern, self-supporting, independent girl of the period. On this occasion—it was Sunday afternoon—they had met at the Plaza for tea and later they were going to Pauline's for a Sunday-night party of some sort. Halpin noticed that his companion wore a frock and hat that he had not seen before. The dress was a soft, dull green, the hat a deeper shade of the same color, trimmed with flat white flowers, and she wore white gloves.

Contrasted with all this white and green, Virginia's hair seemed more golden than usual and her oval cheeks the color of peach blossoms, while her eyes were blue to-day. Sometimes they had looked gray to Halpin; he decided

now that she had the kind of eyes which change with their owners changing moods. Or was it the colors she wore that made the difference? He did not know, and the very uncertainty was pleasant.

At Pauline's Virginia found herself in a great room full of books, its windows opening on the river and the Drive, while on the wide hearth a wood fire flickered, just tempering the April chill of the river wind.

When they entered some one was at the piano and the place was throbbing with rhythmic harmonies which Virginia did not recognize. The dusk was falling, two or three people were scattered about the big room, and Pauline came to meet the new arrivals, smiling, yet speaking in an undertone. Virginia found herself in a chair where she could see the river and the firelight; the piano was far back in the shadows, and the great, pulsing music went on and on. Virginia's head was against the back of the chair, and her eyes closed; she felt tears burning the lids, felt that curious, wordless ecstasy which she had only known two or three times before in her short life, once when she had heard a great violinist play in Chicago.

She was utterly happy; strange images passed before that inner vision which music always seemed to focus, tall trees waving in the wind, great clouds sweeping across a wide sky, while somewhere water flowed strongly, and on this water she seemed to float without volition or effort. Then there came a tempest: storm that swept her on and on, wind that actually seemed to blow her hair and her dress, and then again peace, stillness, a delicate perfume in her nostrils, a curious, rested contentment beyond any mood she had known.

The sounds ceased suddenly; then some one said in a low voice: "Jove, what beauty!" Some one else sighed. Virginia came back to earth and opened her eyes.

The young man she had met at the restaurant that first day with Pauline was standing before her, saying quietly:

"Then you do like Tschaikowski, Miss Ashley? Or did I just put you to sleep?"

She was horribly ashamed of two tears that splashed down on her cheeks, thankful that the other people in the room seemed to be occupied with each other, apparently unconscious of her. Virginia winked her eyes rapidly and looked up at this astonishing young man.

"I never heard of him, Mr. Marne. But your playing would never put any one to sleep."

He sat down on the stool close to her chair, and said slowly.

"You know, I didn't dream that you'd care about music! It seemed too much to hope for—with the other things you have."

She crimsoned suddenly, stirred.

"I may as well confess that I don't know the first thing about it, Mr. Marne. I mean I don't play myself, not even the mandolin!"

Nicholas Marne laughed softly.

"Thank Heaven! That, also, is almost too good to be true!"

"Why?"

"Oh, amateurs, the awfulness of women who 'play a little,' and of the others, men and women both, who talk about it, groping for superlatives and technical phrases to show how intelligent they are! The person who cares for music is like the true lover: the more deeply he feels the harder he finds it to express himself in words!"

"How beautifully easy you make my confession! Are all composers so tactful?"

It was Marne's turn to flush. The sudden flare of color in his cheeks reminded the girl of her first impression as to his extreme youth.

"I assure you, Miss Ashley, I wasn't 'being tactful,'" he said almost stiffly. "I was just saying what I thought."

Halpin broke in at this point:

"Nick, aren't you going to give us Pauline's songs? The music you've written for them."

Virginia now realized that two people she had not met were in the room, one a tall, rugged-looking man, whom she presently discovered to be Randal Kemp, a playwright and novelist, one of whose books she had read, and the other a tiny old lady, with a network of delicate wrinkles and young, eager eyes, dressed in soft gray. Virginia was destined to know the little old lady in days to come, but to-night she merely registered a sort of unworded, but vivid, appreciation of her amazing vitality and of the shining look which met her when they were introduced. The old lady was Mrs. Mal-low, a painter.

"Please, the songs, Mr. Marne!" she said to Nicholas. "I've wanted to hear some of Mrs. Shelton's lovely poems set to music for a long time, a long time."

The young composer left his seat near Virginia and wandered over to the piano.

"Of course, my voice isn't right," he said. "Alice Dale, who is going to sing them on the stage, I hope, does them justice. Still——"

He struck a chord, played a few rippling notes, then sang in a clear baritone the introductory lines to what Pauline had called "A Camping Song."

"The back log glows and grumbles,
The birch bark blazes high,
The little scarlet devils dance,
They race and prance and fly,
While, ever chuckling as it goes,
The little river flows and flows."

The music changed, took on a queer, rhythmic chant:

"It races by, it chases by,
It sings a mystic melody,
It cries at you and laughs at you,
Then quiets you and comforts you.
All night its murmur, soft and deep,
Allures the soul to dreamless sleep:

At dawn its chuckle, mad and gay,
Awakes you to another day—
While evermore its runs away,
It runs and runs and runs away."

The singer repeated the final refrain in a crooning undertone:

"It runs and runs and runs away."

When he stopped the room was still for a moment, then the little old lady in gray murmured, her voice dimly reminiscent of wood pigeons:

"Poetry and music, how wonderful when they really belong together! The song of the river and the song of the wind, poetry and music."

That was the first time Virginia noticed the little lady's trick of repetition. "The love song, now, Nick," Halpin said presently.

"It's a silly little song," said Pauline. "When Nick dressed it up I didn't recognize my own child."

Nicholas sang it, a mellow, simple song that somehow stayed in your memory:

"With some I'd share my wheaten bread,
My glimpse of roof and spire,
Night's purple sky above my head,
My book, my lamp, my fire.

"With others I would share my gold,
What gold the high gods give,
Or youth divide with friends grown old
So they might longer live.

"But, ah, Belovèd, I grow grim
And miserly, it seems:
With you and only you I'd share
My hoard of shining dreams!"

The song ended, Virginia saw the singer turn on his stool, caught that alert, brown gaze which she had begun to like. Then every one began to talk at once, and presently they were all in the dining room. During the rest of the evening there was good talk, plenty of laughter, and pleasant scraps of dialogue, but there was no more singing. Yet for Virginia there was a vivid incident later on, a moment when life seemed to quicken to the rhythm of the

music she had heard. She had gone to Pauline's room to get her wrap—Halpin was waiting for her—and as she returned to the living room she was intercepted in the hall by the young musician. For an instant he was close to her, his hand on her arm.

"That song—did you understand how I felt? As though words and music had been written just for you!"

She retreated, curiously stirred by his nearness, by the grip of his strong, beautiful hand, by his vivid personality. Yet, being an awkwardly sincere young thing, she stammered:

"Mr. Marne, you mustn't. I mean I can't——"

In the shadowy hall he bent his head, kissed her wrist.

"Dear, of course you 'can't,' and I ask nothing—nothing at all! I'm a fool to rush in like this, but it's come the way storms come sometimes, without any warning. Forget it. Remember only that we're going to be splendid pals!"

Just then Halpin came out from the living room, and Virginia had a feeling of safety, relief, and swift, curious regret. In the taxicab going downtown she lay back against her cloak and listened to Halpin's quiet, pleasant voice. She felt shaken, tired, older than she had been that morning. And she told herself that musicians were queer, impetuous, even this red-headed, unique specimen. But his kiss still tingled along her arm, and the words of Pauline's song came back to her, as he had sung them:

"With you and only you I'd share
My hoard of shining dreams!"

Yet in bed that night, as she lay between sleep and waking, it was not about Nicholas Marne that her dream-like musings circled. Of course, he was wonderful, his music awakened things in you, emotions, longings. But she told herself that he was, somehow, too

young, too quickly aroused; the sort of man she could love must be older, more self-contained, with a quiet understanding of life—and of women.

Sometimes a close relation springs up between a little group of people, a relation spontaneous, intimate, a group interest rather than the individual friendship between two. Such a relation few understand or analyze, yet it may become a complete whole as truly as friendship or love. When this wholeness is attained the group is complete only when all its members are together.

Rather to Virginia's surprise, it was such a relation that developed between Pauline, Halpin, Marne, and herself. If she had been secretly uneasy at the idea of seeing the young composer again, she soon forgot this feeling. The third time she met him was at Carnegie Hall, at a Tschaiakowski-Wagner program on a Saturday afternoon. Pauline had told her that the tickets had been given her by Marne and that he would probably arrive late, as he was extremely busy. So when the girl saw the broad shoulders and flaming hair of the young musician approaching them during an intermission she was prepared for a moment of embarrassment, of self-consciousness. But as he sat down beside her she had a swift revulsion of feeling. For after a word of greeting he was instantly immersed in the music, which began again as soon as he was seated.

Virginia watched his intent profile, the little frown which now and then deepened between his eyes, his whole air of impersonal concentration. She decided that she had been absurd to take him seriously, except as a musician. Professionally he was mature, very much a man, even a personage. She realized this when the concert was over and bushy-haired, dark-eyed men came up to speak to him. As Pauline said:

"Nick looks like a boy, but these musicians treat him as if he were a prince!"

And yet, as they walked up Broadway on the way home, Nick insisted upon taking them into a celebrated confectioner's with the ardor of any school-boy.

"I'm not suggesting tea, Pauline, because I'm sure Miss Ashley would rather have a strawberry sundae or a chocolate ice-cream soda. And I'm perfectly right, Miss Virginia. Own up!"

The girl laughed and said that he was. She was suddenly absolutely at her ease, and very happy. There was something about Pauline Shelton that reassured the girl, gave her a feeling that life was a vivid, arresting joy. Pauline asked them both home to dinner; it seemed that Halpin was coming, also. There was an instant when Pauline was ahead of them as they left the shop, and Nicholas said to Virginia in an undertone:

"Wonder how he'll like having us included in the party? Seems to me John hasn't been seeing much of Pauline lately. Alone, I mean."

"Oh, but they don't care. They want us," said the girl quickly. It seemed to her that for an instant Nick's face wore a quizzical look, as if it was she, and not he, who was so very young. It puzzled her for a moment, and then Pauline was with them, chatting gayly. The three of them went uptown on the bus in a gale of laughter, and another of those happy evenings was well launched.

One Sunday night a few weeks later Virginia was expected at Pauline's again, but at the last minute was obliged to telephone that she could not go. It was a chill, wet day and she had had a touch of influenza, had been obliged to stay home from the office on Saturday. The doctor had forbidden her to go out unless the weather were bright, all of which she told Pauline. At the New York end of the wire Pauline turned to her two guests.

"Isn't it demoralizing, the way a slip of a girl makes herself indispensable to three busy people? Three months ago I had never heard of Virginia Ashley. Now I feel that because she cannot come to-night my party is spoiled, my guests in imminent danger of boredom! And I'm a little bored myself!"

Halpin laughed, but the younger man walked to the window and stood staring down at the rain-swept Drive. His broad-shouldered, thin-waisted back looked dejected, his bright head was bent a little, and Pauline said to Halpin: "It's got him at last, and for the first time, poor lamb!"

"What do you mean?" said Halpin.

"Merely that Nick is in love, and that you are responsible, Johnny!" She spoke too low for Marne to hear, but Halpin got up from his chair, limped to the door and back again, suddenly irritable.

"Nonsense, Pauline! - Why, they hardly know each other; they met through us and I doubt whether they've seen each other alone twice."

Pauline admitted this.

"And Virginia is still uninfected by the dread disease," she assured him. "But Nick has every symptom!"

Halpin had a feeling of dismay. And here, beside Pauline, memory clutched him, made him squirm a little. He had taken Virginia to the theater one evening recently. The play had been "Mary Rose" and the girl had been lifted into a dreamy heaven of sheer joy. During the long drive to the ferry she hardly spoke, merely snuggled deep into her warm cloak—it was a chilly night of white moonlight—and Halpin had taken her hand, had held it most of the way from Madison Square to the Battery. He had been in danger of going further, of saying foolish things, such things as he had spoken only to two women in his life, a young girl who had died many years ago, and Pauline.

The thing that had held him back had

not been caution or wisdom, but merely memory—the memory of an evening only last year when Pauline, in trouble, had broken down and cried in his arms. To Halpin that had been a shining experience; perhaps it kept him from asking Virginia to marry him. He told himself that it should have precluded his holding her hand, also. Was he becoming one of those philanderers whom he despised?

Nicholas still stood by the window and Pauline said softly:

"Johnny, don't waste your own chance. She's a dear girl. I believe she could make you happy, really happy."

Halpin looked at her without speaking. After a little his eyebrow twisted itself in a whimsical fashion of its own, and he said:

"She is a dear girl! And she does mean a great deal to me. And yet—ah, Paula, you know how it is! Don't keep me waiting forever, unsatisfied, hungry, lonesome—only God knows how lonesome!"

Pauline's small, dark head came up proudly, her eyes glowed.

"That's not fair, John Halpin," she protested. "I've never kept you waiting, never played that hideous cat-and-mouse game, not for a minute! I've been fair and honest. You know perfectly well why I can't care for you, that I would have cared long ago, if I could."

Nicholas Marne went from the window to the piano, dropped down upon the stool, and began to play some mad, bizarre thing that tingled through one's nerves, a composition with curious dissonances and a sort of wild beauty.

Then the maid came to announce dinner. At the head of her own table Pauline was conscious of a somewhat ironic amusement as she surveyed her guests. Lately Virginia had seemed to bring out in Halpin some streak of gayety, of an almost boyish humor. But to-night he

looked grayer, older than he had seemed in a long time. And Nick, usually her own ardent admirer and comrade, was absent, moody, tongue-tied. Pauline reflected that she, too, missed Virginia. Yet you really cannot let two men forget your very existence!

She had on a soft crêpe gown, gold-colored. In the gleam of the shaded candles she was charming, with her dark, cloudy hair and warm color, and presently she caught the dropped thread of their attention, was making them both laugh. But Halpin wondered at the whims of womankind. If Pauline were only neutral-toned when he was about, he might learn to care for her peacefully, without hope or expectation. But apparently she could not modify her personality, and he could not alter the quality of his affection! Or could some other woman perform that miracle, in time? He ate his dinner, watched Pauline, and wondered.

After dinner Nicholas played again, the others sitting by the fire, exchanging a word now and then, and listening to thunderous harmonies or little, weird whisperings in a minor key, ghostlike, incredibly tender, or lighter themes that seemed to bring into the room the spirit of young summer, of waving grass and trees, rippling water, the varied sounds of birds and insects.

At last Nicholas closed the piano, came, and sat near Pauline. Halpin had gone to the dining room for some water.

"Nick, if I were twenty-five I think I would marry you," she said, with a dreamy smile, "just to hear you play as you never do before a lot of people. It would be like living Hans Anderson's life—'a beautiful fairy tale.'"

The young man leaned over, steadied a toppling log with the tongs.

"No, I'm afraid you wouldn't, Paula. Even at twenty-five you would have been too wise. Musicians are worse than writers or painters or even actors, moody as hell and poor as parsons! The

miracle is that any of them get sane, decent wives!"

Pauline laid a hand on the broad shoulder.

"Nick, that's nonsense, and you know it. I'll grant making music is an emotional business, but you've got more self-control than most men. And you're more fit for marriage, too. Some day you'll make a woman splendidly happy. But it may not turn out to be the first girl you fancy; you may get your share of heartache, like the rest of us."

He touched her dark hair.

"I hate your having had a bad time, Pauline. And I wish you were twenty-five, that 'she' were *you*! You never need to have things explained, moods, the way concentrated work uses one up, the fact that even busy, apparently popular, people can be—damnably lonesome!"

Pauline smiled at him. Her eyes looked very dark and bright.

"I understand, Nick, because I've experienced it—that hideous sense of spiritual isolation. Sometimes it tempts us to pay any price to escape from ourselves, even for an hour. We're alike, you and I, we both want—success in work, success in love—everything!"

Nick nodded.

"Yes, that's it, everything! We're greedy for life. And I suppose we're in for a bad time, when we're not on the tip of Parnassus. You've always said it was a heaven-and-hell business, making music, writing verse."

Just then Halpin came back, and presently he and Nick were on their way home. They walked several blocks without exchanging a word, then Nicholas spoke.

"Jack, I never really thanked you for——"

"For what?"

"Taking me to see Pauline four years ago, just when you did. I was a raw youngster then, crazy as a loon about adventure, 'seeing life.' And I suppose

since then Pauline and I have discussed every subject under heaven; you can say things to her you'd never say to a man. And she spoils a fellow for cheap women. It's a sort of test—comparing girls with Pauline!"

"Yes," Halpin agreed, "that's quite true. And I'm glad I did. But here's my bus. So long, Nick."

"'Night, Johnny Halpin."

Nicholas watched Halpin board his bus. He managed well, never seemed as lame as he really was. After all, wasn't gameness like that the finest thing in life, more vital than music or any other form of art? For the hundredth time Nick wondered why Pauline did not see all she was missing. But then, in spite of Pauline's helping other people to understand life, it was not always easy to understand Pauline. That dead husband of hers must have been a horrible kill-joy!

Nick climbed the four flights to his flat in Fifty-third Street, but when he reached the top he was no longer thinking about Halpin and Pauline.

It was on a June night that Halpin sat in the gallery of a great hotel watching many couples circling beneath him on the dancing floor. His being there was a surprise to himself. Nick and Pauline had planned the party by way of celebration, since Nick's opera had finally been approved by one of the first-rate Broadway producers, and was to be brought out in the autumn. The four had dined together; then, when Halpin would have left them, Virginia, in a pink frock that made her look like a bunch of sweet peas, had protested: "Oh, Mr. Halpin, come and look on! There's a wonderful balcony, and this is a special occasion. We can all have supper together, afterward—and if you stay away none of us will have a good time."

She had said this at the dinner table; Pauline and Nicholas had insisted that

she was quite right, and Halpin, with one whimsical look at Pauline, had surrendered without further argument. Now, as he sat in the gallery, he could see Pauline's blue-and-silver draperies, as well as the sweet-pea frock. He found himself remembering dances he had had with Pauline before the war, and then he was watching Nick's red head, at the moment in close juxtaposition to the sweet peas.

Halpin had his little moment of bitterness: once he had been regarded as a hero, with those other gallant men, dead and living. Now he was simply a commonplace person, too lame to dance or golf, a looker-on at life. And then he heard a low laugh, and looked around to see Virginia at his side. She waved her hand to some deserted escort and settled down beside him, her white slipper tapping to the beat of the gay two-step. Then something, possibly Halpin's sour mood, stilled the slim foot, and after a moment she said:

"It was very good of you to come, Mr. Halpin. Perhaps I shouldn't have asked you."

"I'm only sorry I can't dance with you, little Kentucky."

He was using Pauline's nickname for her, and Virginia liked it.

"I do wish you could, Mr. Halpin, more than anything!"

The fervor of the young voice, the frank sweetness of her eyes, touched him. He smiled back at her.

"Don't waste your sympathy, Miss Virginia. I'm an old grouch at the moment; but of course I know that I'm really one of the lucky ones, with my own work and decent health. But tell me why you're so dazzling to-night? There's something new, different, in the very poise of your head."

"Aren't you clever—to guess!" He saw her take from her frock a thin slip of paper. "Look, Mr. Halpin, I'm twenty-three to-day, and this is the most miraculous birthday gift!"

Halpin smoothed out the paper. It was a check for five hundred dollars.

"It's from the uncle I told you about," she went on swiftly. "He's done it at last, taken out his last patent in his own name—it's some kind of refrigerating method that saves food and money, and all the big manufacturers are interested. Already he has gotten a great deal from it, and he insists on sharing with mother and me. He knows I've wanted to go to college, and he says if I choose Wellesley he and mother may come on to live in Boston, where there's an opening for him, if he wants it."

Halpin gave back the blue slip, saying warmly:

"I'm so glad, for you, and sorry for myself. You can't expect me to be enthusiastic about the prospect of losing my secretary."

Halpin saw something flash into the blue eyes, some young expectancy, a look that dazzled him. He had one of those moments of introspection peculiar to him since those long months in France. He seemed to see this girl as his, a young, radiant wife! The tingling of her fingers under his own, as they still sat side by side, their eyes mechanically following the dancers, touched some secret chord within him. He realized, not for the first time, how young he felt with her, how full of vitality, so that anything, everything, seemed possible.

With that queer inner vision which surprised him sometimes he seemed to see children's faces. Halpin was conscious of a thrill, expectant, alluring. Would not marriage to this girl be saner, wiser, than a perpetual waiting, almost without hope, for Pauline Shelton to give him what she had so often refused?

Even Pauline, with all her charm, lacked this girl's conquering youth. Another man, an old and devoted friend of Pauline, had recently married a girl fifteen or twenty years younger than

himself. Now they were expecting their first child. For the first time Halpin knew a pang of envy for Randal Kemp. He, also, wanted— He felt Virginia's hand tighten, her fingers curl about his own. Then he heard her say in a low voice:

"Mr. Halpin, I was so happy a little while ago. But now, thinking of leaving New York, my new friends—"

Halpin pressed her hand hard. For a long moment they sat watching the shifting colors, listening to the insistent, barbaric rhythm of the music. He spoke at last, in a quiet, deliberate tone:

"I'm glad this has come to you and your mother, Virginia. Whether you go to college or not your uncle's success will mean a fuller life, wider opportunities." He paused, then went on in rather a stiff, impersonal manner: "To some women money of their own really means a chance, not only for culture, travel, but for happiness in marriage, too. I suppose I'm thinking of Nicholas Marne. He has no money yet, but he is full of talent, possibilities. The life of any artist has its dangers, its times of depression, temperamental and financial. Yet Pauline is right to be optimistic about Nick's future. And I know that he's clean, strong, dependable. If I had a daughter, a young sister, I would trust her to him, and I happen to know that he loves you, Virginia, with the sort of love that is rare—outside women's novels. And I'm saying this because—well, because it's true."

The girl slipped her hand free; turned her head away. In the pause which followed Halpin met the most vivid temptation of his life, the temptation to move swiftly toward those purple peaks of sheer physical exhilaration, beckoning him like some shining mirage. She was so appealing, so transparent, so malleable. At that moment he passionately coveted her response to his manhood. Like a million other men no

longer young, he felt that her freshness could restore his own vanished youth.

Then, like a dropped curtain, he faced his own deep-rooted conviction that love, personal, spiritual, enduring, was not his to give. He had bestowed it already, beyond recall. If he took this generous young thing, accepted her affection, her enthusiasm, he would be giving dross for gold. Yet there are moments in life when spurious metals gleam hot and bright in the sun.

"Nick is splendid, his character, his talent," she said at last, "and I think that he does care." But, oh, you know it isn't, isn't—"

Halpin had her hand again; he was looking straight into her sweet, frank eyes. Her nearness, the sharp pang of her loveliness, shut out every other thought for that long moment. He was conscious of just two facts in the universe, beauty and youth. Then they both heard Pauline's voice, her clear laugh; she and her partner were standing directly under their corner of the balcony.

Halpin dropped Virginia's hand. For an instant he covered his face with his own, while they both sat as still as figures carved from stone. At last he uncovered his eyes, saw Virginia's profile, white as snowdrops, the tremulous line of her lips.

She rose, pressed him back into his seat as he started to follow her; with the tips of her fingers she touched his dark hair, with its glint of silver at the edges.

"Please don't come," she murmured. Then in a clear, steady voice she added: "I do understand, Mr. Halpin. And thank you. This is Nick's dance." She looked at him sweetly.

She went down the stairs in a sort of dream, found Nick looking for her, wondered whether she had changed utterly in appearance, whether he would think her ill. But he said nothing,

merely put his arm around her, and they floated down the long room.

When the music stopped Nick guided her to a quiet corner.

"Do you want to go home, little Kentucky? You're tired."

"I wish I were at Pauline's—with you playing to me," said Virginia shakily. "Tschaikowski and Chopin and that queer thing of your own—the one that sounds as if it were trying to tell of all the loneliness in the world!"

"We'll go," said Nicholas. "You're spending the night at Pauline's, anyhow. I'll find her and tell her. She can come later with John."

A moment later Halpin, in the gallery, saw them passing down the room, saw that the girl held her head high. She was game, his little Kentucky! He was conscious of the dryness of his mouth, of the old pain in his leg, of a sick revulsion against life, its inescapable pain, its maladjustments, its utter inadequacy to answer the need of passionate human creatures crying out, all of them, for that peak of dreams, the mingled ecstasy of body and spirit!

Late that night, when Halpin got home, lamer than he had been in months, bone-tired, he closed the door after him with a long sigh of relief.

His big, square sitting room, gray-walled, hung with pictures in black and white, which he had been collecting for years, luxurious in its rather bald, masculine fashion, struck him as it might have struck a stranger. A pleasant

room, yet a little cold. No feminine touches, no light curtains or gay cushions or shaded lights. Books, big leather chairs, the treasured etchings and monotypes accumulated through long years, these made up the character of the place. And one thing more, a framed sketch in colored chalks of a woman, a spirited drawing, made for him several years earlier by an able portrait painter.

He limped to the door to be sure that it was locked, then came back and sat down where he could see the vivid, sensitive face. The artist had caught the character of the sitter, the mingling of delicacy and daring, the fine markings of experience, of emotion.

After all, Halpin told himself, there were things he still possessed—things worth having—his self-respect, his liberty, the right to have this sketch of Pauline Shelton in his room, the right to his own unrealized dream, his own folly. Loneliness, yes—these lines of Pauline's poem came back to him once more:

"A face that you remember when April comes again.
Its sudden look of loneliness, its subtle hint of pain."

She knew it, too, perhaps every one knew it, every one past first youth. But there were kinds and degrees of loneliness. Freedom to remember, to desire—such freedom may mean a solitary life, and yet it may also mean a shadowy, haunting happiness.

ATQUE VALE

GO, and take with you the sun from the day;
Go, and take with you the sparkle from wine;
Go, and take all of the laughter, and gay
Moments of mine.

Yours was the gold that once gilded my east;
Yours was the rose flushed my sunset with red.
Go! I thereafter keep funeral feast,
Mourning my dead.

MAY FOLWELL HOISINGTON.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

RECENTLY a former assistant district attorney talked engagingly to a group of professional writers on the general subject of crime investigation as plot material in the writing of fiction. And it was little short of amazing, as he developed his case, to realize once more, as one does only superficially ordinarily, that life itself offers the really thrilling stories, and that it is, after all, the author who succeeds in catching the more or less elusive story in the lives of those about him, who is the real success in his field. We are all for romance. We like it, we admit unblushingly. And we are not with those who contend morosely that the romantic school of fiction must needs depart from real life for its material, and become therefore sickishly sentimental and unconvincing. And we were intrigued by the quality of sheer romance in which were steeped many of the tales of criminal investigation which the former assistant district attorney told about. Did it ever occur to you that romance could thread even sordid crime? We hadn't thought of it ourselves, until we had laid before us the throbbing material which life itself hands over to the district attorney's office every time a mysterious death or disappearance is reported to it. We'd like to tell you more about this startling conviction, but we realize with pride, if also with necessary deference, that AINSLEE's authors can do it more deftly.

TAKE for example the complete novelette in the March number of the magazine. It is called "The Girl on the Stairs," and is by Winston Bouvé. Here is the absorbing tale of the mystery surrounding the death of a fairly prominent New Yorker, a man about town. His wife, entering the house, unaware of what has just taken place in the library, calls to him from the hallway by way of greeting. She gets no response. But, looking up, she sees on the stairway a young and lovely girl. A moment afterward the girl disappears, the wife enters the library, and— But read this stirring mystery tale, written with the inimitable charm and suspense characteristic of Winston Bouvé. Here is a tale in which you yourself might have taken part. You might easily have

been, for instance, "the girl on the stairs," or the man who a minute later entered the old-fashioned house. All of which goes to say that the story is one not unlike many equally dramatic ones every day enacted in a large city. It's the sort of real life happening that makes necessary the district attorney's office. And it is told with all its elements of irresistible romance, along with its inevitable realism. Read in the March AINSLEE's "The Girl on the Stairs."

OF an entirely different sort, yet no less stimulating, is Elizabeth Irons Folsom's remarkable story of the two women in a certain man's life. In her story, "Lady of High Degree," Mrs. Folsom tells enchantingly all the events in his life which involved the two women. The one was lovely, ethereal, a creature to dream upon; the other far less lovely, and yet in her inexplicable way arresting. A jade carring was involved, too, rather curiously, in the events which heaped themselves about the three. The outcome, however, was swift and decisive. Mrs. Folsom's latest tale is one that you will remember long after you have read it.

PARAPHRASING Shakespeare, Arthur Tuckerman has taken for the title of his latest short-story, "The Quality of Virtue." And if you are on sufficiently familiar terms with your Shakespeare to finish out the quotation, you have something of the import of the tale. With his customary subtle and delicate psychology, together with absorbing plot, Mr. Tuckerman has written for the next number a diverting story of young Americans in Paris.

THE foregoing are a representative few of the distinguished group of stories in the March number of your favorite magazine, AINSLEE'S. There are at least as many more absorbingly entertaining tales wherewith to regale your leisure hours. The March number will prove to you all over again how good an all-fiction magazine can be.

Ainslee's Announces the Winners of the November Advertising Prize Contest

- First Prize, \$15.00, Miss Mabelle Holmes, 7827 Langley Ave., Chicago, Ill.
For letter submitted on Colgate & Co.
- Second Prize, 5.00, Mrs. H. S. Watson, 423 18th Ave., San Francisco, Cal.
For letter submitted on Eveready Flashlight.
- Third Prize, 3.00, A. W. Meadows, Jr., 200 Ouachita Ave., Hot Springs, Ark.
For letter submitted on J. F. Sturdy Co. (Sta-Lock Cuff Link).
- Fourth Prize, 2.00, Samuel H. Taylor, 119 No. Dewey St., Philadelphia, Pa.
For letter submitted on Black Jack Chewing Gum.

It was an exceedingly difficult task to select the winners because of the number of high-grade letters submitted, which clearly indicates our readers *do* read the advertisements. The letters are most helpful, and the advertising department takes this opportunity of thanking you.

See announcement below for February contest

WHY?

We receive many letters of helpful suggestion, coupled with applications for the privilege of making a better job of our advertising department.

Perhaps you too wonder why our magazines carry so little advertising. Let us take you into our confidence.

The real truth is that advertisers, almost as a whole, have hesitated about using fiction magazines because of a conviction that the purchasers of such magazines buy them for the stories they contain, and do not read the advertisements.

You, as readers, and we, as publishers, know this to be wrong. We know you read the advertisements in our magazines, and that you can help us prove it to the advertisers.

Therefore, if you will tell us why you think one advertisement in this magazine is better than another and if your letter proves to be the best one received on the subject during the month, we will send you \$15.00. We will pay \$5.00 to the reader who sends in the second best criticism, \$3.00 to the reader who sends in the third best, and \$2.00 to the reader who sends in the fourth.

This contest costs you nothing to enter. There are no conditions or rules to be complied with. Simply read over the advertisements in this magazine, being careful to state which magazine and number you are criticizing, and tell us which advertisement you like best, and

WHY?

Contest for this issue closes March 1st, 1924

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT
STREET & SMITH CORPORATION
79 Seventh Avenue New York City



Underneath that perfect finish

IF YOU could only take a knife and cut into the sole of that new shoe you are buying. If you could only see why there is nothing like leather to keep your feet healthy, why leather lets your feet breathe, why leather, as nothing else will, supports the arch of the foot.



The tanning industry operates great research laboratories where eminent chemists are constantly experimenting to improve leather. That is why leather is better than it ever was. And why you will get more satisfaction from leather shoes, belts and other articles than ever before:

The appearance of the bottom of the soles of your shoes makes no difference to you. After a day's wear you won't be able to remember whether it was white or black, buffed or polished, rough or smooth. But *your feet will tell you* whether the sole is leather or not.

If it is leather, they will have been comfortable all day long. Leather is really a second skin to your feet—a protective, resilient covering through which your feet can actually breathe.

The heat has been able to escape through leather's pores. Your feet do not perspire and become chilled.

The tiny elastic fibres, that you could see if you cut a sole in two, give easily and readily when you walk. Leather soles and heels are lighter—lighter for their strength and thickness than any others. And they are safe—even on wet sidewalks they refuse to slip.

When you buy new shoes, ask for all-leather ones. They are not only the most stylish shoes you can wear—get them for health's sake, for comfort's sake, for the sake of long, hard wear. When you have finally worn out those leather soles, you will find them the most easily replaced of any. Tell the repairman that you want *leather*.

AMERICAN SOLE and BELTING LEATHER TANNERS

17 Battery Place, New York City

Nothing takes the place of
LEATHER

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

Do You Envy the Health of Others?

Read these remarkable statements of what
one simple food can do

THERE is nothing mysterious about the action of Fleischmann's Yeast. It is not a "cure-all"—not a medicine in any sense. But when the body is choked with the poisons of constipation—or when its vitality is low so that skin, stomach, and general health are affected—this simple natural food achieves literally amazing results.

Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are millions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work—invisibly—the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion and assimilation, strengthening the intestinal muscles and making them healthy and active. Health is yours once more.



ABOVE

"Up to a couple of years ago I never had regular intestinal action. I worked on this defect in many ways—abdominal exercises, vegetarianism, occasional medicine, Dr. Cass... Fleischmann's Yeast has been the only agent that, with me, ever produced normal movement continuously. And as a natural consequence, I now feel finer in other ways—enjoy everything more: food, work, play. Even my pipe seems to smoke better!"

(A letter from Mr. Henry J. Carroll of St. Louis)

AT RIGHT

"I AM a graduate nurse. Back in 1911 while in charge of an operating room, I was afflicted with boils. I tried many remedies—still boils came, and I got run down and unable to carry on. Finally a physician told me to take Yeast. . . . That was twelve years ago, and I have never had a boil since. I have used Fleischmann's for hundreds of patients and for any number of different ailments. I am glad to say that twelve years have not dimmed my enthusiasm for Fleischmann's Yeast or staled my appreciation of what it has done for me and for others in the course of my professional life."

(Miss Ann Batchelder of New York)



AT RIGHT

"Run-down and ill from overwork, I had local neuritis, stomach acidity and insomnia; a formidable array of enemies for the brave little yeast cake to tackle! Yet in two weeks friends began to take notice. . . . In a month my complexion was clear and lovely, stomach in perfect condition, nerves 'unjangled,' gone the 'All worn out' feeling, and I was able to sleep like a top."

(Extract from letter of a Chicago business girl, Miss Dorothy Deene)



ABOVE

"IRREGULAR hours, eating in snatches, desperate hurry . . . nervous, little or no appetite, slept poorly, and worst of all suffered from constipation. Then I tried Fleischmann's Yeast. Almost at once 'evacuation' was easier, no stomach pains, no heartburn. Today—practically complete elimination of bowel trouble, clearer skin, sounder sleep, better health."

(Extract from letter of a New York reporter, Mr. A. Kandel)



EAT 2 OR 3 CAKES A DAY REGULARLY

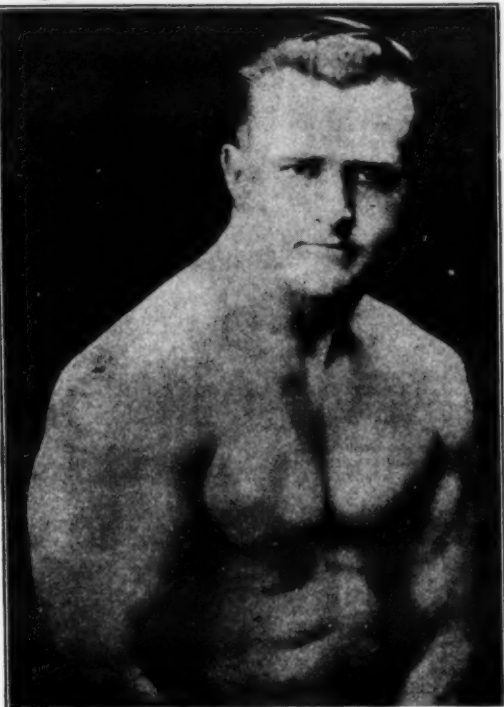
—before or between meals—plain, dissolved in water or milk or spread on crackers or bread. A cake dissolved in a glass of warm water before breakfast and at bedtime is especially beneficial in overcoming or preventing constipation. Fleischmann's Yeast comes in the tinfoil package—it cannot be purchased in tablet form. All grocers have it. Start eating it today. And write us for further information or our free booklet on Yeast for Health. Address: Health Research Dept. Z-1, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

Are You Ready for the Ash-Can?

DO YOU realize what it means to neglect your body? Do you know that you will clog up with waste matter and deaden your life just as ashes do in a furnace? Are you going to drag yourself through a life of misery and be ready for the undertaker when you should really be only starting to enjoy life? Come on and brace up. Take a good hold of yourself and shake those cobwebs out of your brain. Give me a chance at that weak backbone of yours and let me put a pair of man-sized arms into those narrow shoulders.

Pills Never Made Muscles

I am not a medical doctor. I don't claim to cure disease. Neither do I put any self-assumed title of Professor before my name. *I am a builder of muscle*—internal as well as external. I claim and can prove that by proper exercise you can even build muscle in and around your heart and every vital organ. The kind that shoots a thrill through your veins and reaches every crevice of your body. I add years to your life, and oh boy! what a kick you get out of every day you live. And talk about big, brawny arms and legs, or broad backs and husky chests—just take a look through this winter's copies of Physical Culture Magazine and see for yourself. You will see a few pictures of my pupils there—living examples of the Earle Liederman system—doctors, lawyers, business men, but every last one of them good enough to pose as a professional strong man. Some are in better shape than men who are now acting as instructors to others.



Earle E. Liederman
America's Leading Director of Physical Education

Pep Up

What are you going to do about it? Don't sit idle and wish for strength. That will never bring it. Come on and get busy. You must have it, and I'm going to give it to you. I don't promise it, I guarantee it. You don't take any chance with me, so come on and make me prove it.

Send for My New 64-Page Book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains forty-three full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration to you. It will thrill you through and through. All I ask is 10 cents to cover the cost of wrapping and mailing, and it is yours to keep. This will not obligate you at all, but for the sake of your future health and happiness, do not put it off. Send to-day—right now, before you turn this page.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 5002, 309 Broadway, New York City

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN

Dept. 5002, 309 Broadway, N. Y. City

Dear Sir: I enclose herewith 10c. for which you are to send me, without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

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"What a whale of a difference
just a few cents make!"

— all the difference
between just an ordinary cigarette
and—FATIMA, the most skillful
blend in cigarette history.

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World's best makes—Underwood, Remington, Olivetti—reduced to almost half.
\$2 and it's yours

All late models, completely rebuilt and re-brushed—brand new. GUARANTEED for ten YEARS. Send no money—by FREE catalog shows actual machines in full colors. Get our direct-to-you easy payment plan and 10-day free trial offer. Limited time, no surprise. Get your Free Trial Typewriter Book, 177 N. State St., Dept. 2-55 Chicago.



Free Trial



MAKE MONEY AT HOME

You can make 15 to 50 dollars a week at Home, IN YOUR SPARE TIME. Easily learned by our New Simple Method. NO CANVASSING. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. We teach you how, GUARANTEE you STEADY WORK and pay you cash no matter where you live. Write today for FREE sample, lesson and illustrated Booklet.

UNITED SHOW CARD STUDIOS.

211 Susan Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

for Economical Transportation



Quality Cars at Quantity Prices



Chevrolet now leads all high-grade cars in number sold.

Our new low prices have been made possible through doubling our productive capacity.

We are now operating twelve mammoth manufacturing and assembly plants throughout the United States in which thousands of skilled workmen are turning

out two thousand five hundred Chevrolets per day.

Notwithstanding our recent big reduction in prices the quality and equipment of our cars have been steadily increased.

Today Chevrolet is beyond comparison the best dollar value of any car sold at any price, due to its low average operating and maintenance cost.

Chevrolet Motor Company, Detroit, Mich.

Division of General Motors Corporation

Chevrolet Dealers and Service Stations everywhere. Applications will be considered from high-grade dealers only, for territory not adequately covered.

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SUPERIOR Roadster	• •	\$490	Commercial Cars
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SUPERIOR Utility Coupe	• •	640	SUPERIOR Light Delivery
SUPERIOR Sedan	• •	795	Utility Express Truck Chassis •

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



How Did Your Garters Look This Morning?

Keep them fresh and lively—the added comfort will repay you. Try the Wideweb "Boston."

GEORGE FROST COMPANY, BOSTON
MAKERS OF VELVET GRIP HOSE SUPPORTERS FOR ALL THE FAMILY

DeLuxe DIAMOND BOOK FREE!

3000

Exceptional Values in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry.

The most complete and beautiful book of its kind—YOURS FREE! 96 colored pages full of wonderful bargains—gifts for every occasion. Buy on our

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You have 10 WHOLE MONTHS to PAY on anything you select. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. No Red Tape. Every transaction strictly confidential.

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Dept. 1846 "THE HOUSE OF QUALITY"

AUTHORIZED CAPITAL \$1,000,000.

L.W. SWEET INC.

1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

Solitaires from \$25 to \$1000



WHITING-ADAMS BRUSHES

A brush expert says they are the best Hair Brushes made. They are penetrating. They go all through the hair to the roots and stimulate growth. They make a beautiful radiant sheen. The glory of woman is made more glorious with Whiting-Adams Hair Brushes.

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JOHN L. WHITING-J. J. ADAMS CO.
Boston, U. S. A.

Brush Manufacturers for Over 114 Years and the Largest in the World

THE CALL OF ELECTRICITY

MEN WANTED NOW AS NEVER BEFORE

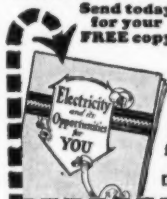
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Satisfaction Guaranteed

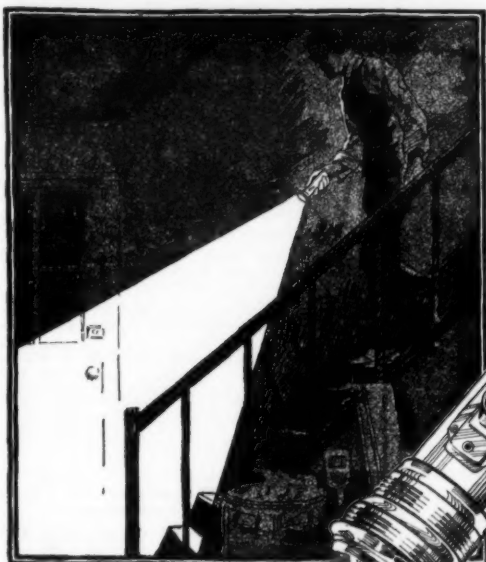
You don't risk a cent, for back comes every penny of your small membership fee if you are not satisfied when you finish training. Send for Facts—Today.

Associated Electrical Engineers
Dept. 824, 537 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago

Relief for coughs

Use PISO'S—this prescription quickly relieves children and adults. A pleasant syrup. No opiates.

35¢ and 60¢ sizes sold everywhere



No. 2674 Eveready
Focusing Spotlight
with the 300-foot range



**EVEREADY
UNIT CELLS**
fit and improve all
makes of flashlights.
They come in two
sizes to fit every tubu-
lar case flashlight.
Know the Eveready
size that fits your
case. Then you can
buy new Eveready Unit
Cells without taking
your flashlight along.
Eveready Unit Cells
mean brighter flash-
lights and longer bat-
tery life.

Don't grope - - - *use your flashlight!*

FOR that dark cellar stairway, where a misstep may mean a fall—keep a flashlight handy. Don't fumble in clothes closets—hang an Eveready by a tape on the closet door and have instant, safe, bright light whenever you need it. Don't stumble—keep an Eveready by the back door for outdoor trips. Keep another on your bedside table to see that baby is covered, to find your slippers, to look at your watch.

To get the best light and most light from any flashlight, keep it loaded with Eveready Unit Cells; long-lived cartridges of brilliant light. All electrical and hardware dealers, drug, sporting goods and general stores, garages and auto accessory shops sell them.

When you buy new flashlights, be sure they have **EVEREADY** stamped on the end. **EVEREADY** means the highest standard of flashlight quality, and Eveready Unit Cells give more light longer. Prices from 65c to \$4.50 complete with battery—anywhere in the U. S. A.

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC.
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EVEREADY
FLASHLIGHTS
& BATTERIES
—they last longer

21 Jewel ~ Extra thin STUDEBAKER The Insured Watch



New Model
Extra
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**SENT FOR
\$1⁰⁰ DOWN!**

Only \$1.00! The balance in easy monthly payments. You get the famous Studebaker 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime; a choice of 54 new Art Beauty Cases; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions—*direct from the maker* at lowest prices ever named on equal quality.

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For a limited time we are giving away FREE with every Studebaker Watch a beautiful pattern Studebaker Watch Chain. Write now while offer lasts.

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Send at once and get a copy of this book—FREE! See the newest, beautiful, advance styles in Studebaker Art Beauty Cases and Dials. Read how you can buy a 21 Jewel Studebaker Insured Watch direct from the maker—save big money—and pay for it on easy monthly payments.

Write! for our free book. It will post you on watch styles and watch values. Send coupon at once. Get Free chain offer today while it lasts.

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Please send me your Free Book of Advance Watch Styles and particulars of your \$1.00 down offer.

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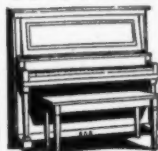
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Over 1000 other Cozy Home Furnishings. Latest styles. Just what you need now. Save big money at our low Factory-to-Family prices. Pay as little as \$3 down; up to a year and a half to pay balance. Get all your Furnishings at once—pay as you use. Thousands buying this new way.



Big Catalog FREE

New Spring "Larkin Book of Better Homes." Shows everything for parlor, porch, dining-room, bedroom, kitchen. **Bargain Prices** on famous Symphonola Phonographs. Also Symphonic Pianos, Player-Pianos in genuine Mahogany, Walnut, Fumed Oak. Free trial. Up to 4 years to pay. Satisfaction or money back. Check below article interested in.



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Cut out this adv.—write TO-DAY for FREE Book.

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Deformities of the Back

Thousands of Remarkable Cases



An old lady, 72 years of age, who suffered for many years and was absolutely helpless, found relief. A man who was helpless, unable to rise from his chair, was riding horseback and playing tennis within a year. A little child, paralyzed, was playing about the house after wearing a Philo Burt Appliance three weeks. We have successfully

treated more than 50,000 cases the past 20 years.

30 Days' Trial Free

We will prove its value in your own case. There is no reason why you should not accept our offer. The photographs show how light, cool, elastic and easily adjusted the Philo Burt Appliance is—how different from the old torturous plaster, leather or steel jackets.

Every sufferer with a weak, bowed or deformed spine owes it to himself to investigate thoroughly. Price within reach of all.

Send For Our Free Book. If you will describe the case it will aid us in giving you definite information at once.

PHILO BURT MFG. CO.
105-10 Cold Spring Turnpike
JAMESTOWN, N. Y.



"THE AIR IS FULL OF THINGS YOU SHOULDN'T MISS"



When Radio called, Eveready was ready

TWENTY-ONE years ago, when wireless telegraphy had its first birthday, National Carbon Company's dry cell batteries were nine years old. Even then, its batteries were world famous as convenient, economical and efficient sources of electric energy.

With the introduction of popular broadcasting, radio leaped into universal service. Radio engineers used Eveready Batteries as their standard in designing tubes and receiving sets. Eveready engineers, backed by the most complete research and testing

laboratories known to the industry, worked with them to discover how the known dry cell could be improved for radio work.

The fruit of these efforts is the Eveready family of radio batteries conspicuous for vitality and endurance—the right battery by test and proof for every radio use.

Insist on Eveready Batteries—they last longer.

Informative and money-saving booklets on Radio Batteries sent free on request.

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, Inc.
New York, N. Y.

Headquarters for Radio Battery Information

If you have any battery problem, write to RADIO DIVISION, NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC.
208 Orton Street, Long Island City, N. Y.

Eveready "B", 22½ volts,
No 766 with Six Fahnestock
Spring Clip Connectors



Radio has moved from the laboratory and amateur's work-table out into the refined surroundings of the family living room. In keeping with this new companionship we offer this reliable, long-lived Eveready "B" Battery, in an attractive, new metal case, worthy to stand beside the rich cabinets of fine radio sets.



EVEREADY

Radio Batteries

—they last longer

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

Aspirin

Beware of Imitations!



Unless you see the "Bayer Cross" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer Aspirin proved safe by millions and prescribed by physicians over twenty-three years for

Colds	Headache
Toothache	Lumbago
Neuritis	Rheumatism
Neuralgia	Pain, Pain

Accept "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" only. Each unbroken package contains proven directions. Handy boxes of twelve tablets cost few cents. Druggists also sell bottles of 24 and 100. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.

Relief for coughs

Use PISO'S—this prescription quickly relieves children and adults. A pleasant syrup. No opiates

35¢ and 60¢ sizes sold everywhere

Special Offer to Introduce Our Cut Glass

HANDSOME
12-PIECE

Sherbet Set

Only \$2.50



6 sherbet glasses and 6 six-inch plates, all handsomely cut in large flowers and foliage. Very good-looking, very useful. Send \$2.50 money order, check or cash, and we will ship prepaid. If west of the Mississippi, add 40 cents for postage. Separately, plates \$1.25, sherbets \$1.25. Money back if you are not delighted.

Dept. AF-2 **Krystal Krafsters** Trenton, N.J.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

\$1 Brings This Genuine DIAMOND

Easy for you to own this beautiful ring or give it as a present. Simply send \$1 to us today.

10 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

Wear ring 10 days and if you don't agree it is an amazing bargain, return it and we will refund your money. If satisfied, pay \$1 a week until \$32.50 is paid.

FREE catalog. Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry, \$10 to \$1000. All on long credit. Wonderful values.

Est. 1890 Address Dept. 241

BAER BROS. Co.
6 MAIDEN LANE - NEW YORK

No Joke To Be Deaf

—Every Deaf Person Knows That I make myself hear, after being deaf for 25 years, with my Artificial Ear Drums. I wear them day and night. They are perfectly comfortable. No one sees them. They stop headaches. Write me and I will tell you a true story, how I became deaf and how I make you hear. Address

GEORGE P. WAY, Artificial Ear Drum Co. (Inc.)
40 McCordway Bldg., 5221 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Mich.

21 Jewel Burlington

Used on nearly every watch in the U.S. Every 21 Jewel Gold and Sapphire Jewels. 25 Year Gold Stride case. Only at Jewel Send for beautiful free book. Do it Today.

Burlington Watch Company, Dept. 84-02
15th St. and Marshall Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

YOU CAN make \$1 to \$2 an hour writing show cards at home in your spare time. Quickly and easily learned by our new simple method. No canvassing or soliciting. We show you how, guarantee you work at home no matter where you live and pay you cash each week. Full particulars and booklet free. Write to-day.

AMERICAN SHOW CARD SYSTEM LIMITED
Authorized and Fully Paid Capital, One Million Dollars
240 Adams Bldg. Toronto, Canada

SEND US \$1

Most wonderful offer ever made! Send a dollar TO-DAY! No bother! No delay! Beautiful cluster of very brilliant blue-white diamonds, platinum set comes at once for 30 DAYS' FREE TRIAL. See for yourself that it looks just like a \$200 solitaire. Try to buy it anywhere at our price. If satisfied, pay only \$1.67 monthly—price \$46.70. Otherwise return and we'll refund your dollar. Rush your dollar TO-DAY!

For this GENUINE DIAMOND CLUSTER

FREE CATALOG—of other wonderful values. Diamonds, watches, etc. Best values—Your OWN TERMS (within reason) PAY-AS-YOU-PLEASE! Address Dept. 42-5.

O. F. Bale & Co. EST. 1888
21-23 Maiden Lane New York



*End the day
the Fairy way!*

TAKE the Fairy way to dreamland! Before retiring wash or bathe with Fairy Soap and experience the glow of perfect white cleanliness.

Smooth and mild. Nothing in Fairy Soap to irritate the most sensitive, tender skin. It cleanses and soothes and helps you hold that youthful freshness.

Millions of people use Fairy Soap daily for toilet and bath. To young and old it is bringing new skin health—a new appreciation of a pure white soap.

The handy, convenient oval cake helps, too! Fits the hand and wears down to a thin wafer without breaking.

It's white! It's pure! It floats!



FAIRY SOAP

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



Painful chest congestions

The moment you feel that painful tightening that betokens a chest cold—go for the bottle of Sloan's. Apply gently; you don't have to rub it in.

Immediately you feel a gentle glowing warmth. The contraction relaxes—the congestion breaks up—the pain ceases—soon the cold is gone. Get a bottle from your druggist today—35 cents.

Sloan's Liniment *kills pain!*

\$2 Brings This Genuine DIAMOND PLATINUM RING



SEND ONLY \$2.00 and this hand carved and pierced ring of Solid Platinum set with a brilliant blue white, perfect cut, first quality Diamond comes to you charges paid.

10 DAYS' Free Trial

Keep the ring ten days. If not satisfactory or if you can duplicate this value anywhere for less than \$100.00, your deposit will be returned to you. After trial pay balance \$2.00 a month for ten months. Price **\$72.50**

FREE—Write today for Royal catalog of Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry. Thousands of gift suggestions shown in our \$2,000,000 stock. **10 months to pay on everything.** Address Dept. 994.

ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO.
35-37-39 Maiden Lane-New York

INFANTILE PARALYSIS

Caused Club Foot

For 16 of his 17 years, Edward Bolland's foot was badly deformed as a result of Infantile Paralysis. His letter and photos show what was done for him at McLain Sanitarium in 5 months.

I wish to express my thanks for the great benefit that I received at your Sanitarium. I walked on the side of my foot for 16 years, and after 5 months' treatment, I am now walking flat on my foot and as good as anyone.

EDWARD BOLLAN,
Slidell, Louisiana.

Parents of Crippled Children

and young adults should know about McLain Sanitarium, a thoroughly equipped private institution devoted exclusively to the Treatment of Club Foot, Infantile Paralysis, Spinal Disease and Deformities, Wry Neck, Hip Disease, Diseases of the Joints, especially as found in children and young adults. Our book, "Deformities and Paralysis," and "Book of References," sent free.

McLAIN ORTHOPEDIC SANITARIUM
954 Aubert Ave. St. Louis, Mo. GR86



THROAT IRRITATIONS

Throat irritations quickly disappear when you take Brown's Bronchial Troches. A dependable remedy—not a candy. Used for more than 70 years by singers and public speakers. Promptly relieves hoarseness, loss of voice, coughing. All druggists.

JOHN L. BROWN & SON, BOSTON, MASS.

General Sales Agents: HAROLD F. BITCHER & CO., Inc.
New York London Toronto



DEAFNESS IS MISERY

I know because I was Deaf and had Head Noises for over 30 years. My invisible Acoustic Ear Drums restored my hearing and stopped Head Noises, and will do it for you. They are Tiny Megaphones. Cannot be seen when worn. Effective when Deafness is caused by Catarrh or by Perforated, Partially or Wholly Destroyed Natural Drums. Easy to put in, easy to take out. Are "Utter Comforts." Inexpensive. Write for Booklet and my sworn statement of how I recovered my hearing.

A. O. LEONARD

Suite 96, 78 5th Avenue New York City

Skin Troubles — Soothed — With Cuticura

Soap, Ointment, Talcum, Etc. everywhere. Samples free of Cuticura Laboratories, Dept. D, Malden, Mass.

LOFTIS
BROS. & CO. INC.

DIAMONDS WATCHES

Genuine Diamonds Guaranteed
CASH OR CREDIT



"Sylvia"
Diamond Ring
Blue-white, radiant perfect cut Diamond.
The ring is 18-k solid White Gold
\$100

Terms: \$10 Down, \$2.50 a Week



Loftis Carved "PERFECTION"
Diamond Ring
Blue white, perfect cut Diamond
\$75

Terms: \$5.00 Down, \$1.25 a Week



"No. 1 Special"
Diamond Ring
Brilliant Diamond, blue white and perfect cut. Ring is 18-k Solid White Gold
\$50

Terms: \$5.00 Down, \$1.25 a Week

Loftis Carved "Perfection" Ring is 14-k Solid Green Gold. Diamond set in White Gold prongs. Bridal Blossom design. Special at \$75
Terms: \$7.50 with order or no delivery, then \$2.00 a week until paid.
Also up to \$1,000. Wedding Rings to match.
We import Diamonds direct from Europe and sell direct to you. Our immense buying power is your gain.

Send for Catalog
Over 5,000 Illustrations of Diamond-set jewelry, Watches, Wrist Watches, Pearls, Men's Rings, Silverware, etc. Select as many articles as you wish and have all charged to one account. Send for your copy for free examination. Catalogs are mailed everywhere.

Rectangular Wrist Watch
18-k White Gold, \$29.75;
14-k, 16 Jewels, \$24.55. Yours for \$3.00 down, then \$1.00 a Week until paid.

17 Jewel ELGIN
No. 15—Green Gold, engraved, assorted patterns, guaranteed 25 years.
12 Size, gilt dial \$32
Terms: \$3.25 Down, then \$1.00 a Week.

LOFTIS BROS. & CO.
National Jewelers
DEPT. K222
188 N. State St., Chicago, Ill.
Stores in Leading Cities



It ruined her entire evening

SOMETHING that she had overheard quite by accident—several men talking about her when they didn't know she was near.

Surely this sort of thing couldn't be true of her—and yet she had heard them with her own ears!

She couldn't get home fast enough. Nor could she explain to her escort why she was so upset. She felt only like bursting into tears—which she did the moment she was alone.

* * *

That's the insidious thing about halitosis (unpleasant breath). You, yourself, rarely know when you have it. And even your closest friends won't tell you.

Sometimes, of course, halitosis comes from some deep-seated organic disorder that requires professional advice. But usually—and fortunately—halitosis is only a local condition that yields to the regular use of Listerine as a mouth wash and gargle. It is an interesting thing that this well-known antiseptic that has been in use for years for surgical dressings, possesses these unusual properties as a breath deodorant.

It halts food fermentation in the mouth and leaves the breath sweet, fresh and clean. Not by substituting some other odor but by really removing the old one. The Listerine odor itself quickly disappears. So the systematic use of Listerine puts you on the safe and polite side.

Your druggist will supply you with Listerine. He sells lots of it. It has dozens of different uses as a safe antiseptic and has been trusted as such for a half a century. Read the interesting little booklet that comes with every bottle.—Lambert Pharmaceutical Company, Saint Louis, U. S. A.



Relief for coughs

Use PISO'S—this prescription quickly relieves children and adults. A pleasant syrup. No opiates.
35 and 60 sizes sold everywhere

Bright EYES Are An Asset

Clear, sparkling EYES are an aid to success, both in business and society. Keep your EYES constantly bright and alert through the daily use of **Murine**. This harmless lotion instantly imparts new life to dull, heavy EYES.

Write **Murine Company, Dept. 61, Chicago**, for **FREE Eye Care Book**

MURINE FOR YOUR EYES



She Found A Pleasant Way To Reduce Her Fat

She did not have to go to the trouble of diet or exercise. She found a better way, which aids the digestive organs to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

She used *Marmola Prescription Tablets* which are made from the famous Marmola prescription. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutriment of food. They will allow you to eat many kinds of food without the necessity of dieting or exercising.

Thousands have found that the *Marmola Prescription Tablets* give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal; healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

MARMOLA COMPANY

283 Garfield Bldg., Detroit, Mich.



Get This Wonderful Ring, If You Can Tell It From a Genuine Diamond Send It Back

These sparkling, beautiful, CORODITE diamonds positively match genuine diamonds in every way—same blinding flash and dazzling play of light and color. They, alone, stand up diamond tests, including terrific acid tests of direct comparison. Lifetime experts need all their experience to see any difference. Prove this yourself.

Wear a Corodite Diamond 7 DAYS FREE

Make instant, fearless testing. Wear sparkling Corodite emerald diamond side by side on the same finger for 7 days. If you or your friends can tell the difference, send it back; you own the out a single penny. That's fair enough. If you keep the ring, price printed here is all you pay. No trouble, no loss. Remember, Corodite diamonds are the same cutting as genuine stones.

No. 1—Ladies' Solitaire 14K Gold S. Ring . . . \$2.84
No. 4—Ladies' Hand-Carved Basket Setting, plat. finish . . . \$3.96
No. 5—Ladies' Solitaire Bridal Ring, engraved . . . \$3.54
No. 7—Gents' Heavy Bachelor 14K Gold S. Ring . . . \$2.84
No. 8—Gents' Man's Hand-Carved Carved Gray . . . \$2.84

Carat size gems. Beautiful mountings of most modern design. Choice of gold or silver white platinum finish. Unqualified 30-year guarantee. Choice of gold or silver white platinum finish. Unqualified 30-year guarantee. Choice of gold or silver white platinum finish. Unqualified 30-year guarantee.

SEND NO MONEY Keep your money right at home. Just send name, address and number of ring wanted and allow us to ship of paper. (Other rings arrive deposit shown above with postman. If you decide not to wear ring after 7 days' wear, send it back and your money will be immediately returned. Send today.

E. RICHWINE CO.
19 West Jackson Bldg., Dept. 947, Chicago, Illinois
Sole Importers Genuine Corodite Diamonds

THE VALUE OF CHARCOAL

Few People Know How Useful it is in Preserving Health and Beauty

Nearly everybody knows that charcoal is the safest and most efficient disinfectant and purifier in nature, but few realize its value when properly prepared and taken into the human system for the same cleansing purpose.

Charcoal is a remedy that the more you take of it the better; it is not a drug at all, but simply absorbs the gases and impurities always present in the stomach and intestines and carries them out of the system.

Charcoal sweetens the breath after smoking, and after eating onions and other odorous vegetables.

Charcoal effectually clears and improves the complexion, it whitens the teeth and further acts as a natural and eminently safe cathartic.

It absorbs the injurious gases which collect in the stomach and bowels; it disinfects the mouth and throat from the poison of catarrh.

All druggists sell charcoal in one form or another, but probably the best charcoal and the most for the money is in Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges; they are composed of the finest quality Willow charcoal powdered to extreme fineness, then compressed in tablet form or rather in the form of large, pleasant tasting lozenges, the charcoal being sweetened to be smooth and palatable.

The daily use of these lozenges will soon tell in a much improved condition of the general health, better complexion, sweeter breath and purer blood, and the beauty of it is that no possible harm can result from their continued use, but on the contrary, great benefit.

Many physicians advise Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges to patients suffering from gas in stomach and bowels, and to clear the complexion and purify the breath, mouth and throat. They are also believed to greatly benefit the liver. These lozenges cost but thirty cents a box at drug stores. For a free trial send your name and address to F. A. Stuart Co., 1 Stuart Bldg., Marshall, Mich. You get more and better charcoal in Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges than in any of the ordinary charcoal tablets.

DIAMONDS

FOR A FEW CENTS A DAY

Don't send a single penny. Ten days Free Trial. When the ring comes examine it—if you are not convinced it is the Greatest Bargain in America, send it back at our expense. Only if pleased, send \$1.50 weekly—at the rate of a few cents a day. This Bargain Cluster Ring with 7 Blue-White Perfect Cut Diamonds can be yours. No Red Tape. No Risk. Send for it today. It pictures thousands of bargains. Address Dept. 1922.

SEND NO MONEY
Looks like \$350 Solitaire No. 5 only \$59.50
We Trust You

Million Dollar Bargain Book FREE

J.M. LYON & CO.
2-4 Maiden Lane N.Y.

FREE

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE



Get this, men—

A complete assortment of the world's finest
smoking tobaccos—sent to any smoker
anywhere—on 10 days approval

A new idea for Pipe-Smokers: 12 famous tobaccos, packed in a handsome Humidor—shipped to you direct to help you find the soul-mate for your pipe.

GUARANTEED BY

The American Tobacco Co.

MOST men have written their John Hancocks on a lot of "dotted lines." But, if you're a pipe-smoker, we'll wager that you've never signed a fairer, sweeter contract than the little coupon at the bottom of this page.

Just a few strokes of your pen—and you can end your quest of years for a perfect smoking tobacco—drawing dividends for life in unalloyed pipe-satisfaction.

But we are getting ahead of our story.

The average pipe-smoker is the greatest little experimenter in the world. He's forever trying a "new one," confident that some day he'll find the real affinity for his pipe.

So we created the *Humidor Sampler*.

Into a bright red lacquered humidor case, we have packed an assortment of twelve famous smoking tobaccos—covering the whole range of tobacco taste.

There are myriads of different brands of smoking tobacco on the market. But of them all, there are 12 distinctive blends which, in our opinion,

stand in a class by themselves for superlative individuality of flavor, aroma and smooth, sweet, even quality.

These twelve decisive blends—the twelve "primary colors" of tobaccos—have been selected for the *Humidor Sampler*. When you have tried these twelve, you have tried the best; if your tobacco-ideal is to be found anywhere, it must be one of these.

Ten-Day Approval Offer

We are eager to send the *Humidor* assortment to any smoker, anywhere, on ten days' approval.

Send no money. Just sign and mail the coupon. That will bring you the *Humidor* assortment direct from our factories to your den. When the postman

brings the package, deposit \$1.50 with him, plus postage.

If a ten-day try-out of these tobaccos doesn't give you more real pipe pleasure than you've ever had before, besides revealing the one perfect tobacco for your taste—the cost is on us.

Simply return the *Humidor*, and you'll get your \$1.50 and the postageback *promptly*—and pleasantly. The coupon in your obedient servant; use it.



Send No Money—Just Mail Coupon

A \$3.95 Test for \$1.50

If you were to try all 12 of these tobaccos in full size packages, the cost would be:

<i>Blue Bear</i> . . . . .	.25
<i>Capitan</i> . . . . .	.30
<i>Imperial Cigar Club</i> . . . . .	.30
(Medium)	
<i>Imperial Cigar Club</i> . . . . .	.30
(Light)	
<i>Old English Cigar Club</i> . . . . .	.15
<i>The Garlick</i> . . . . .	.30
<i>Carillon Club</i> . . . . .	.15
<i>Yule Melrose</i> . . . . .	.25
<i>Three Stars</i> . . . . .	.25
<i>Lone Jack</i> . . . . .	.30
<i>Wild! Latokias</i> . . . . .	.45
<i>Leusmann Perique</i> . . . . .	.25

Total . . . \$3.95

But through the *Humidor Sampler* you get a liberal "get acquainted" quantity of each for \$1.50

The American Tobacco Co., Inc.
Marburg Branch, Dept. 33
Baltimore, Md.

Please send me, on 10 days' approval, one of your *Humidor Samplers* of twelve different smoking tobaccos. I will pay postman \$1.50 (plus postage) on receipt—with the understanding that if I am not satisfied I may return *Humidor* in 10 days and you agree to refund \$1.50 and postage by return mail.

Name.....

Address.....

Note:—If you expect to be out when postman calls you may enclose \$1.50 with coupon and *Humidor* will be sent to you postpaid.



Now two kinds of Quaker Oats
QUICK QUAKER makes oats the quickest breakfast
 —cooks in 3 to 5 minutes

OATMEAL COOKIES

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup shortening, 1 cup sugar, 2 eggs, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped nuts, 3 cups rolled oats, 1 cup flour, 1 teaspoon salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nace, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cloves, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup raisins, 3 teaspoons baking powder, 4 tablespoons candied citron, 4 tablespoons candied orange, 4 tablespoons candied lemon, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk.
 Cream shortening; add sugar and cream again. Add one egg at a time and cream thoroughly after each addition. Add fruits, nuts and raisins, then milk, and stir well. Sift flour, salt, spices and baking powder and mix well with rolled oats; fold into first mixture. Drop from spoon on cookie sheet. Bake in hot oven (400 degrees) for 15 minutes.

Creamy, flavory, wonderful oats; a hot breakfast in less time than it takes to make the coffee!

Ask your grocer for Quick Quaker. We perfected them for busy wives and mothers who, because of limited cooking time, might serve oats too seldom.

Everyone knows that a hot breakfast stands supreme. And that oats are the premier vigor food as a starter for the day. Now have them every day.

THE SAME RICHNESS AND FINE FLAVOR

Quick Quaker is the same as regular Quaker Oats.

The grains are cut before flaking. Then rolled very thin and partly cooked. They cook more quickly. That is the only difference.

The rich, rare Quaker flavor is there—the flavor that comes from queen grains only; the richness that keeps Quaker the world's preferred brand.

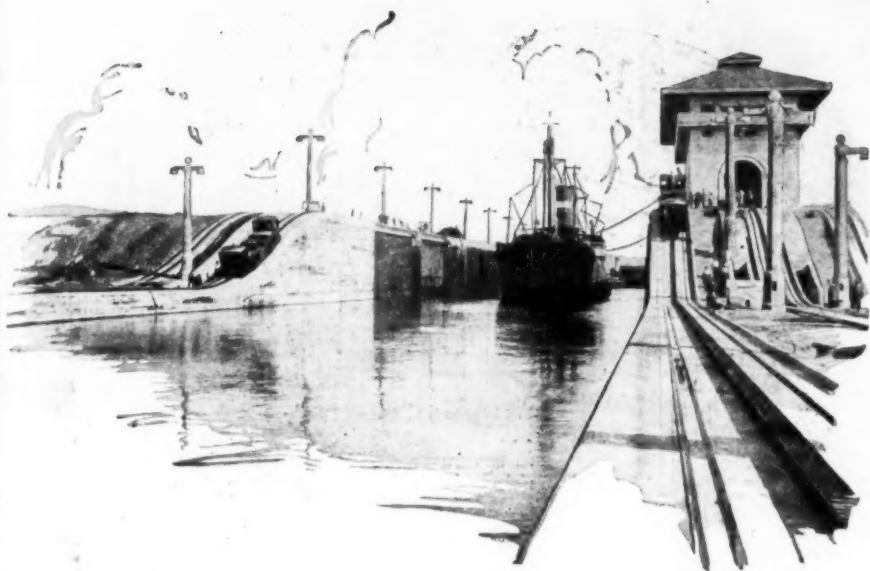
TWO KINDS NOW—"QUICK" AND "REGULAR"

Ask for the kind you prefer. For quick breakfasts, get Quick Quaker. For Quaker Oats as you've always known them, ask for Regular Quaker. But be sure you get Quaker. Look for the picture of the Quaker on the package.

Quick Quaker
 cooks in 3 to 5 minutes

REGULAR Quaker Oats
 the kind you have always known





Eight thousand miles saved on every trip

It used to be 13,307 miles from New York to San Francisco by sea; it is now only 5,262.

The Panama Canal, which seemed such a heavy expense when it was built, is an immense national economy.

A greater economy because of the 1,500 General Electric motors which do its work—pulling the ships through, pumping water, opening and closing the locks—all at such a little cost.



To lighten human labor, shorten distance, and save money—these are the services of electricity. General Electric Company makes much of the apparatus by which electricity works, and stamps it with the monogram shown above.

GENERAL ELECTRIC



Matched for Smartness

A compact, slim and lovely, for your purse
... face powder for your dressing table ...
in boxes of matching beauty. Finished in
rich ebony black enamel with golden
colored Grecian border.

Unmatched in Quality

Soft, exquisitely perfumed, powder, fairy-
like in texture. Made of ingredients that
are especially soothing to the skin. Blends
smoothly and evenly, giving a pearly trans-
parency to the complexion.

Compact \$1 00 Luxury Face Powder \$1.00

An engraved monogram
adds a personal touch. Any
jeweller will do it at slight
cost.

Colgate's Compact Powder

Soft as the skin it beautifies.